

# Sketch

COMIC BOOK ART TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

**TOM  
BIERBAUM**

*Chasing Your Dream*

**MITCH  
BYRD**

*Inventing The Wheel*

**NEIL  
VOKES**

*Illustrating by Example*

**UKO  
SMITH**

*Breakdowns of a Sketch Card*

**ROBERT W.  
HICKEY**

*Digital Publishing: WordPress*

#35

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**BARBARA KESEL  
CALEB PROCHNOW**  
Talk  
**MR. BLANKY CRANKY BONES**

**TIM SALE**  
**INTERVIEW**  
**HEROES TO SUPERHEROES**



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**How To articles and other coolish things...**

April 8th, 2008 Bill Nichols Posted in General, Sketch Digital | No Comments » Edit |

One of the things (among many) that Bob and I have discussed for this website is the idea of using it as an extension of the print *Sketch Magazine*. Having features that complement one another. For example, if we feature illustrations in black-and-white in the magazine, we could full the full-color version here. Things like that.

I do know that I want to continue the education and entertainment of those who are looking to us to provide some insights in the comics-creating process. So, if we can provide some **How To** articles that we can have here on the website or if we can provide some links to creator websites who have **How To** features added to their own pages, then it's good!

With that said, I'd like for you to do me a favor, would you? If you are a comics creator (and I know that there are some who'll be reading this) and you have a **How To** that you would like to share or if you know of or have links to other creators and their **How To** pages... drop me a line.

Put "Sketch How To's" in the subject box and write me at: billn@sketchmagazine.net

BOOKMARK

**Beau Smith's No Guts, No Glory**

**Mission**

Sketch Magazine's goals are aimed toward enhancing the comics art form, and others, through education and knowledge. We offer creators artistic tips and techniques that help them to enjoy working in this field.

Robert W Hickey  
publisher/comic creator

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## A note...



A lot has been going on here at Sketch Magazine headquarters. Bill and I have been working on the sketchmagazine.net website. We wanted to communicate directly with our fellow creators so we decided to set up a blog.

It was time to learn Wordpress. I've been so impressed with Wordpress that I've decided to write a series of article on how-to-use Wordpress to publish online comics and strips. In researching Wordpress I found ComicPress, which is a WordPress template, created by Tyler Martin. You'll find out more about templates in the articles. The reason I'm bringing this up. To put Comicpress through the wringer and set up and run a comic site I needed something that Comicpress didn't offer; a three column format. So I contacted Tyler and we came to an agreement, Sketch Magazine would fund a new three column format, and also a full page comic book format, and they would be

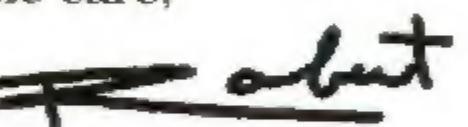
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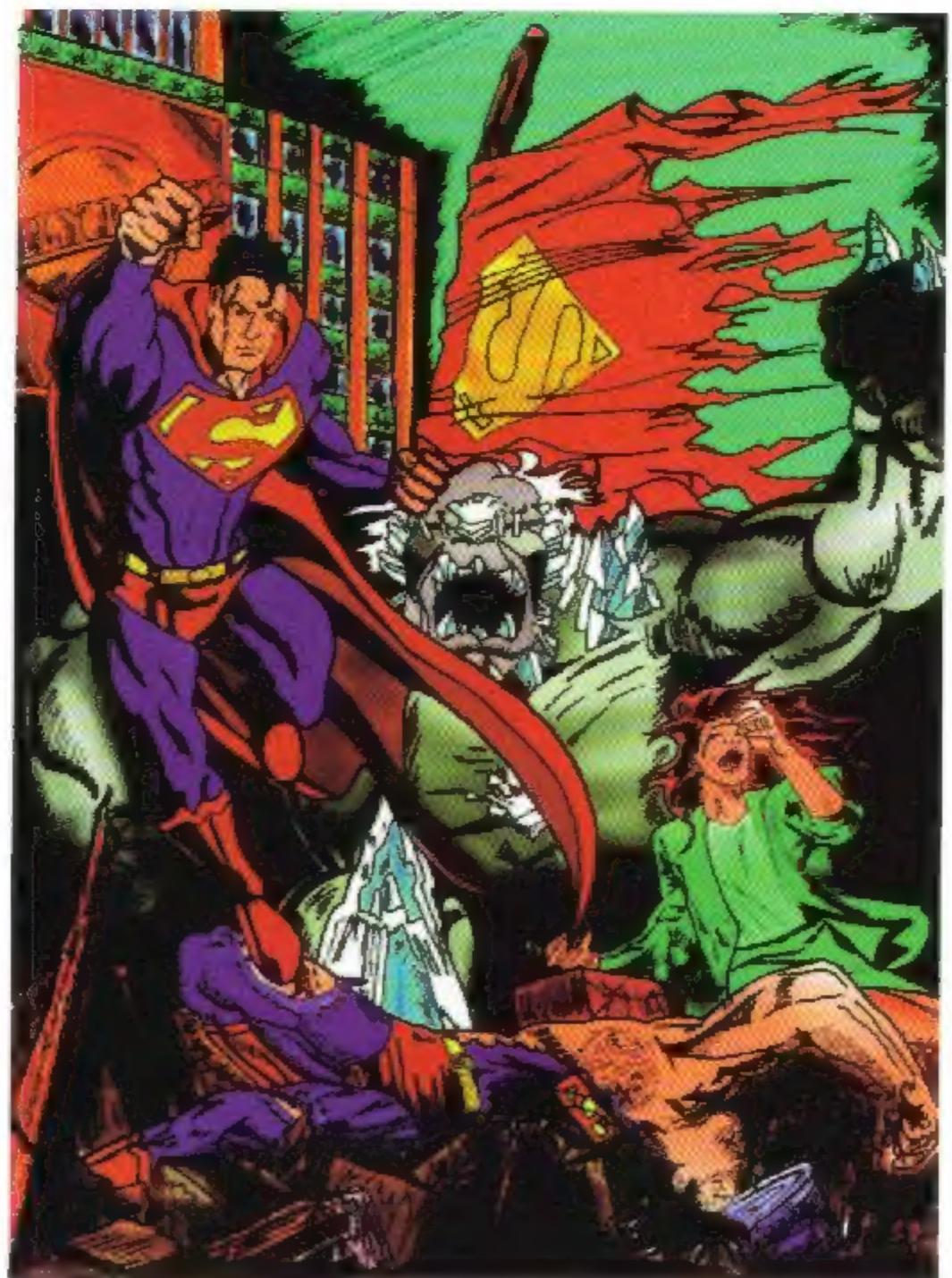
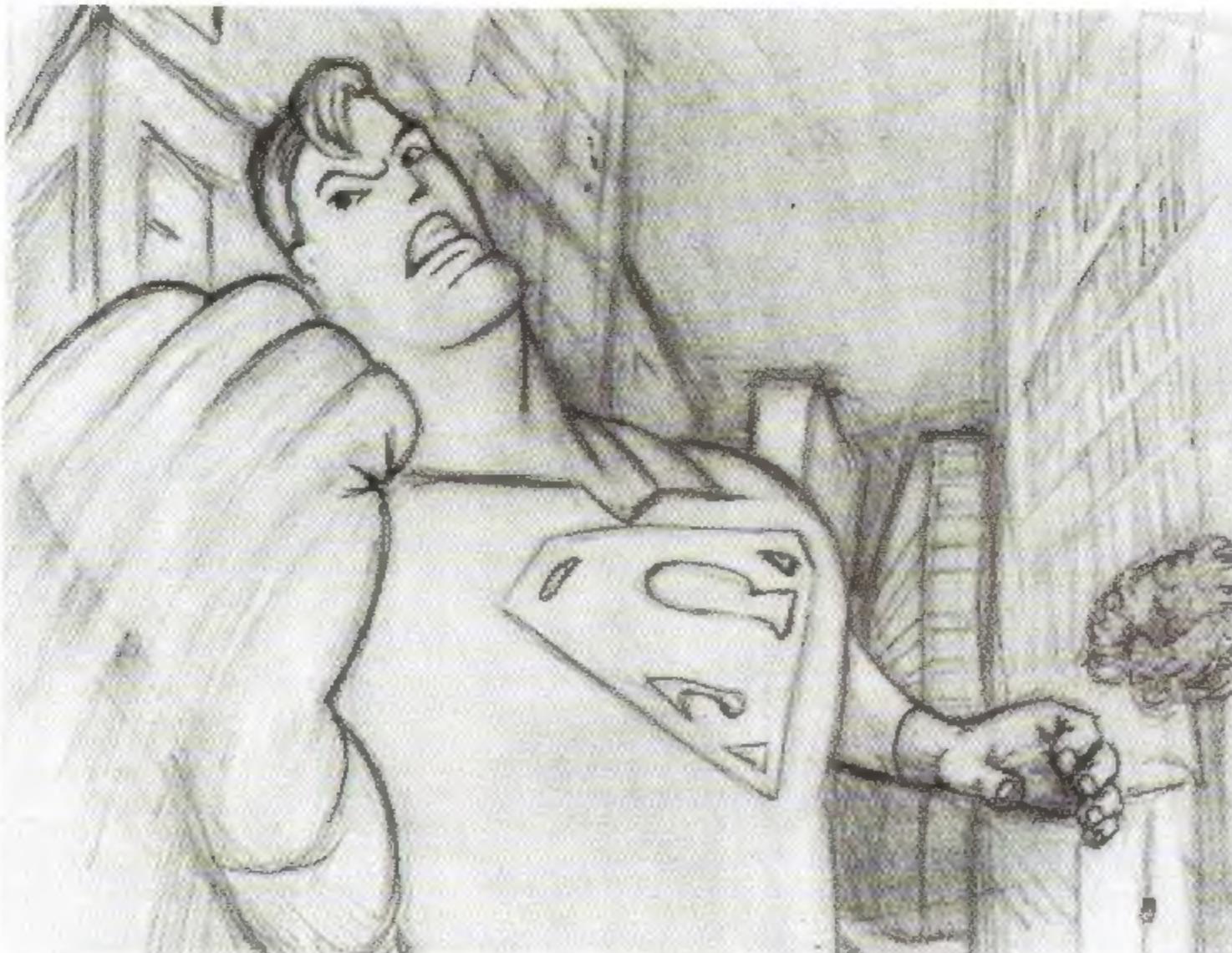
**Sketch Gallery Benefit Show and Auction.** The event at Comics 2 Games in Northern Kentucky was a great success. We received over 1200 cards from over 200 artists. We had a great time at the shop with a few of the artists. As the cards were going off on eBay they announced the total amount to the festive crowd. It was a great feeling! To date the auction has made over \$7,000 to donate to the American Cancer Society. Next year I'd like to invite everyone to join in on the fun. It's a great feeling to know how caring the creators are that work in the comic book industry.

I could keep going, there's seems to be so much going on right now, but I've got to save something for the blog!

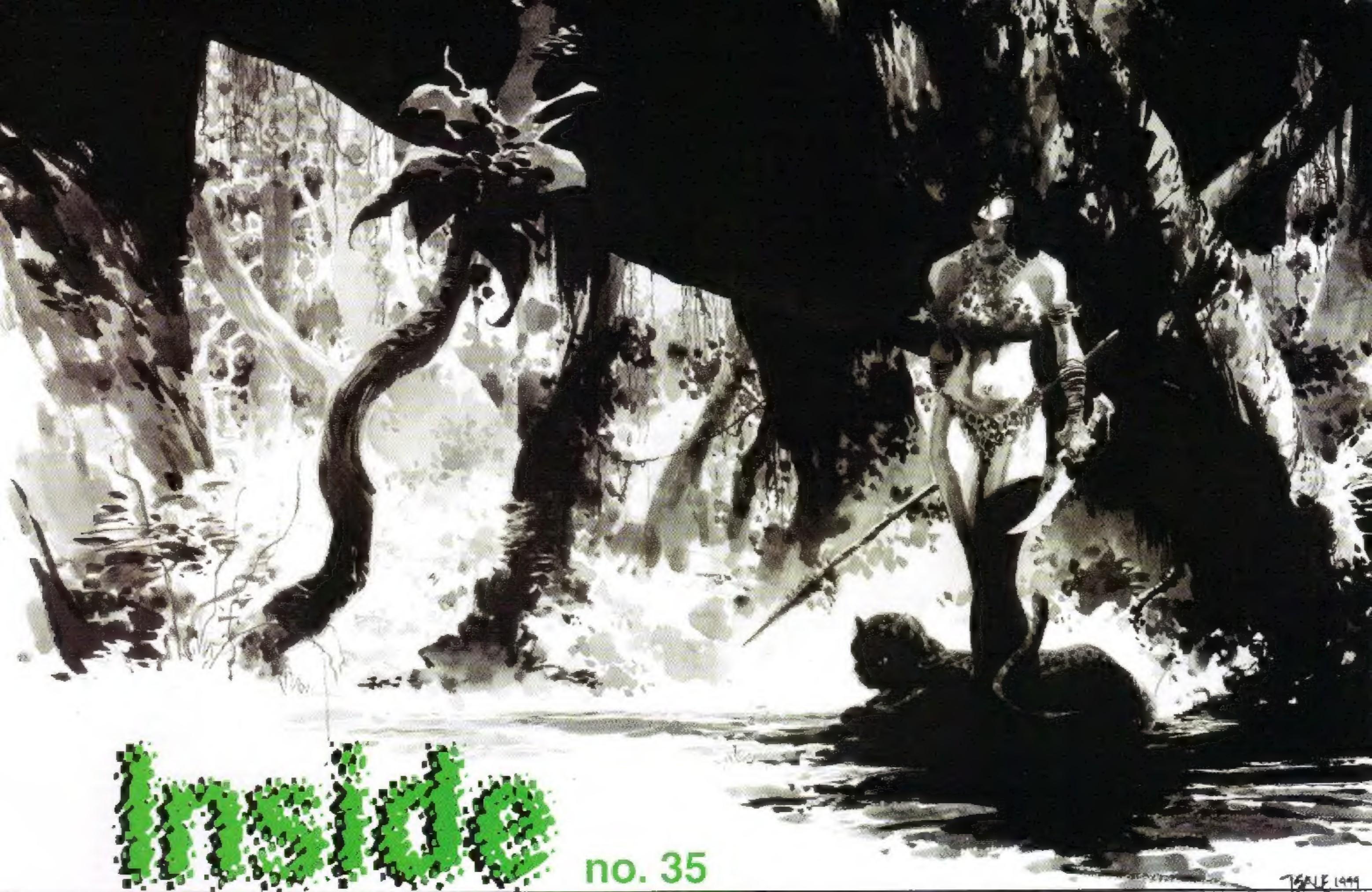
I will throw out that we are thinking about offering back issues in digital .PDF and/or CBR formats. Let us know what you think.

Take care,

  
Robert W Hickey



I apologize to Oliver D. Gogembiewski and Don McMurry two SUPERMAN VS DOOMSDAY DVD Art Contest winners, for leaving them out of Sketch #34. My apologizes guys! I'll try to do better next time.



no. 35

TSALF 1999

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Sketch Card by Uko Smith

# Inside This Month ... CONTRIBUTORS



## Robert W. Hickey

Along with his duties as publisher of Sketch Magazine, he is the creative force behind Blood & Roses, StormQuest, Tempered Steele and Race Danger. He currently has a new Blood and Roses project in the works that will be appearing at SKYSTORMONLINE.COM. Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Art and Afterburn Media LLC.



## Bill Nichols

As editor of **Sketch Magazine**, Bill welcomes the chance to educate and help other pros to pass along their hard-earned knowledge of All Things Comic Book. Bill has inked for Knight Press (*StormQuest, Blood and Roses, Dead Kid Adventures*), Caliber Press (*Raven Chronicles, LegendLore, Magus*) and others. As co-publisher of SkyStorm Studios, Bill is excited to be working on some old favorites and some new stories, as well as bringing life to his own Sparta Bay project.



## Tom Bierbaum

Tom, with wife Mary, has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures, a creator owned project by Knight Press.



## Mitch Byrd

Mitch's pencils wow everyone. While you enjoy his exclusive Sketch material issue after issue, look for his work on Guy Gardner: Warrior, Shi, Starship Troopers, and many other comics, as well as Blue Line Art's Notes to Draw From, Notes to Draw From 2 and Mitch Byrd's Scribbles and Sketches. Mitch's latest projects include a Blood and Roses graphic novel and a creator owned project titled Kings of the Road.



## Bob Almond

A comics fan since the age of nine, Bob instantly set his career goal on breaking into the funny book biz and is probably most-known for his 3-year critically-acclaimed run with Priest & Sal Velluto on Black Panther. His most recent assignment has been a return to his cosmic Marvel roots with the *Annihilation Conquest: Quasar* series. Bob lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts with his wife Diane, his son Nathan and cats Tux and BJ. You can visit his website The Bob Almond Inkwell at <http://www.almondinink.com>



## Neil Vokes

In 1984, Neil Vokes started on *Rabotech Masters* with Rich Rankin at Comico Comics. That eventually lead to their creation of *Eagle*, which ran for several years. Neil has drawn many, many things including: *Superman Adventures*, *Tarzan the Warrior*, *Ninjak*, *The Wicked West*.



## Uko Smith

His sketch cards have been featured in The Complete Avengers, DC Legacy, The Women of Marvel, Batman Archives, Indiana Jones Heritage and Indiana Jones 4. Uko is working on personal creator owned properties while still doing freelancing works for major companies. Uko also teaches The Comic Book Illustration class at his former art college, which he is very excited about. Be on the look out for a series of illustrated gallery works for Provocateur Gallery in Chicago where he will be debuting his long awaited return to the erotic genre which got him started.

# Sketch

COMIC BOOK ART TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

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*publisher / creative director*  
Robert W. Hickey

*Editor*  
Bill Nichols

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Comic books are a **fun medium!** Blue Line Arts' goals are aimed toward enhancing this art form - and others - through knowledge and quality art supplies. We try hard to make certain that you, the reader, have the comic book technique information you require for your personal enjoyment of this great field.

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## Bills Words...



What lesson shall I impart to you this time?

How about this: Keep with it. Or get a move on. Whichever works for you...

Now this could refer to any number of things, but right now, it means that you make your days count for something. If you've been putting something off that you should be doing, make a plan and do it. If it's just something as simple as painting the fence, then do it. If it's writing your term paper, then write the thing. Working on a novel? Write it. And so on, and so on. The things in our lives will be there and need to be attended to, even if it's the creative impulse.

Charities? Good works? Do them. The more you add to some benevolent venture, the less the load on others. There is always going to be a need, so help fill it.

- The Blue Line Pro Sketch Card for Cancer.
- The Hero Initiative.
- The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

There are things to do and you can help, by actually doing the good works yourself or lending your support or even spreading the word. Everyone has a talent for something and maybe you just haven't found yours yet. It's there; you just have to look.

Today is a new day and you have the opportunity right now to start fresh. Get going. This is your wake-up call. Nobody's going to beg you, but there are a lot of folks who will encourage you. You have to take that first step. Make a list and check the things off one by one...you can do it.

Wake up. Sleep time is over, my friends. Have a good one. Get some things done and have some fun doing it.

Make your days count.

Bill





COBB© Robert Kirkman and Cory Walker. Artwork by Cory Walker

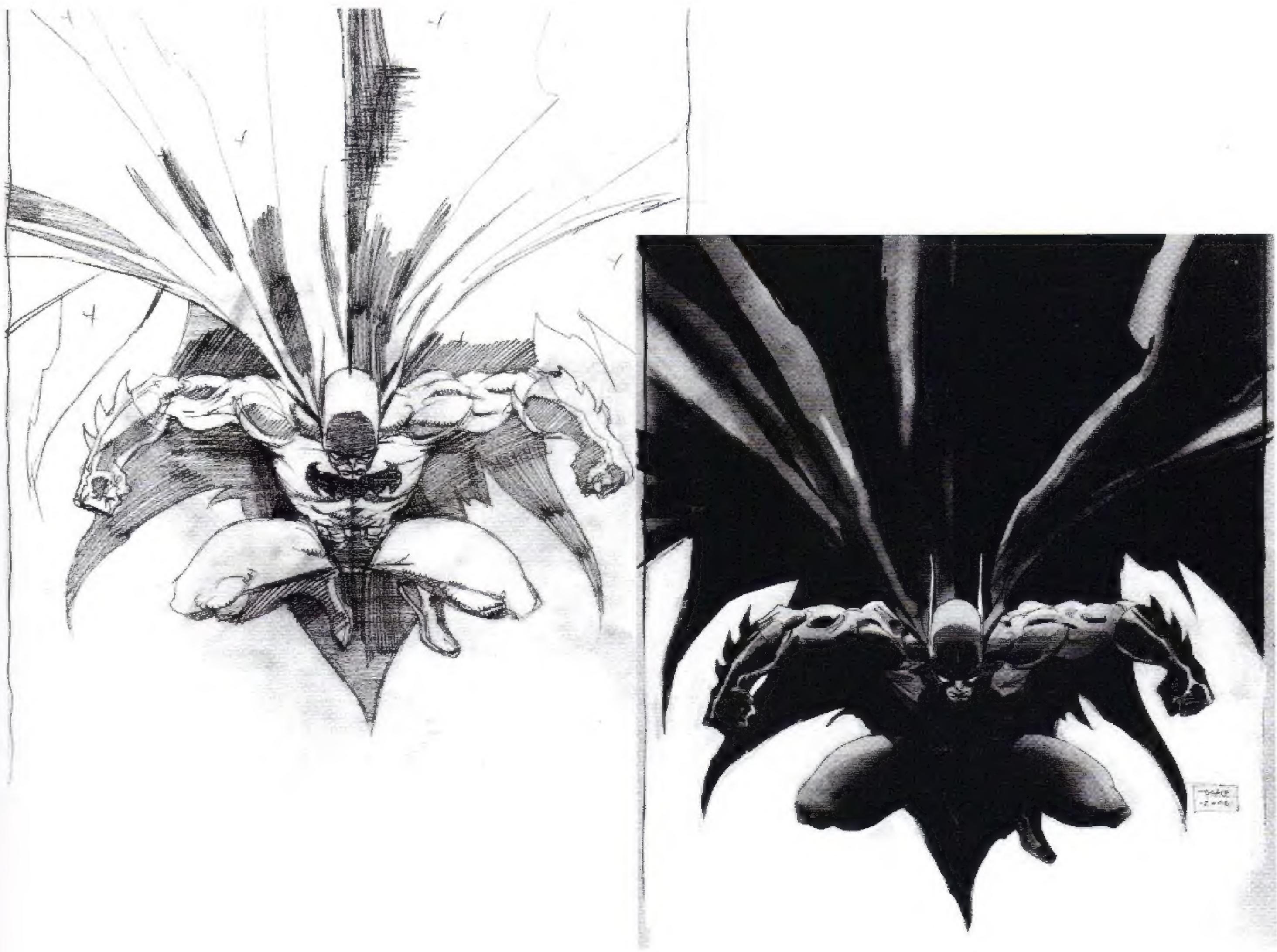
# TIM SALE

## HEROES TO SUPERHEROES

by Bill Nichols

I remember a long time ago seeing a comic book thing called ***Thieves' World***. I had been a big (BIG) fan of the series of novels where a group of authors all played in the same city. There's something about the idea of collaboration that resonated with me when I was in Apa-5 (and after) and it seems to have also done the same throughout Tim Sale's career. Lord knows I'd love to team up with him; he's just that good!

Enjoy the interview. I did.



**Sketch:** Can you tell me what you have on your drawing table right now, Tim?

**Tim:** Well, there are always copies of inspirational art by other fantastic comics artists I admire. There is a

**Steranko** Chandler piece as well as a page of his from the fantastic and ground-breaking *At the Stroke of Midnight* story he did for **Tower of Shadows**, a **Milton Caniff**

Christmas illustration depicting a Tibetan setting, the great **Bernie Wrightson** advertisement he did for the early 70's DC adaptation of The

Shadow, and the unbelievably cool single-page of vignettes that **Frank Frazetta** did for **Creepy** magazine, depicting various horrifying animals that humans were reported to morph into in various legends from around the world. All works of art that inspire me consistently. Oh! And the splash page to **Jack Davis'** *The Betsy*, from EC's **Two-Fisted Tales**.

**Sketch:** Is there anything you would rather be doing? Or would you say that you are doing it?

**Tim:** I would rather be cooking or watching TV with my gal, but if you mean what work would I rather be doing, then that's a much harder question, and challenging. I am at a place in my life and career where I am looking for the next path that inspires me. Something more than the next story or series, something that gets my artistic juices flowing in the way that they were when **Jeph Loeb** and I were really cooking in the 1990's. Jeph is a very powerful force to collaborate with, and I am now looking for the



thing that will take that place, creatively. I am extremely fortunate to be able to make a living through various ways in art in the meantime, but I am casting about a bit for the next lightning strike. There are a few things that are coming up, though.

**Sketch:** Your style is very much yours, I think. What are some of your influences?

**Tim:** So many! In comics, the biggies are **Alex Toth**, **John Buscema**, **Jim Steranko**, **Neal Adams**, **Ruben**

**Pellejero**, **Jean Giraud**, **Juanjo Guarnido**, **Jack Kirby**, **Marie Severin**, **David Mazzucchelli**, and **Jaime Hernandez**. There are many other artists in comics that I admire, but I am not sure if they have influenced me, artists such as **James Jean**, **Mark Chiarello**, **Dave Johnson**, **Mike Mignola** and **Michael Golden**. Active Images has done a book on my career in which I talk more in depth about the work that has influenced me, called **Tim Sale: Black and White**,

(was that shameless? Sorry) but for now, that's what I got. Really, there are too many to mention, although I can spend days just talking about the things that I admire in the work of others; it's just so exciting to see the talent on display all around us. To look closely at the choices and craft in illustration is endlessly interesting to me. In the last 10 years or so I have been educated to the art of American illustrators from the 1930's through the 1960's, and it has had a major impact on how I approach my work.

**Sketch:** You've worked a lot with Jeph Loeb. Is there anybody else you might want to collaborate with?

**Tim:** This is an ongoing question for me, as I have been under Jeph's wing for so long, and we have had such an amazingly symbiotic creative relationship. I have recently, as I sit here in early 2008, ended a Superman storyline with the fantastically gifted **Darwyn Cooke**, a six-issue mini-series called *Kryptonite* for the **Superman Confidential** title. I bow to no one in my admiration for Darwyn's talent and ability, and I love him and his belief in comics and what art and work should be. His **New Frontier** story was the last work that I showed my non-comics friends and said, "Look at this! Isn't this great?!", and it is the first work that I ever wrote fan mail to. If you ask me — and you did, right? — who I'd want to collaborate with, though, here's the thing:



a great writer does not necessarily make a great collaborator, and that is just the nature of creativity and collaboration. So I am not sure who I would like to work with. Many of the most talented writers in comics are very controlling in the scripts they write, and I completely understand where they are coming from. They work hard to craft and create a page and a rhythm that fits their scripts, and that's fine. We now live in an age of the super-star writer in comics, when, for the first time in my memory, there are at least a half-dozen writers who can sell a comic on their name alone. That is a new thing, and it understandably

tells a writer that what he or she wants to do on a page or a sequence or a comic is of primary importance. For me, I need to have more involvement, and so it has been hard to find someone to work with, at least at the beginning. Having said that, I have been going back to my roots, as it were, and **Matt Wagner** has been talking in the last few months about a licensed project that, if it comes through, will be one of the highlights, ambition-wise, of my career. So there!

**Sketch:** What would you say is the best thing about the process of creating comics for you?

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**Tim:** The collaboration with a partner, feeling that you are each and both enthusiastic about the story you are telling, and what is the best way to tell it. Next is seeing the picture take shape before my eyes on the paper. That is just awesome.

**Sketch:** What things spark your imagination, Tim? What inspires you?

**Tim:** Life inspires me, but I find that most often it is other people's art and interpretations creatively that inspire me. And it works back and forth — for instance, beautiful women inspire me, but an **Adam Hughes'** drawing of a beautiful woman makes something else altogether click in me...and then I will look at women in real life, their shapes, their hair, their

eyes, the body language and attitude, differently.

**Sketch:** What else would you like to tackle? Are there any characters come to mind? Are there any characters left?

**Tim:** No specific characters, no. There are many that would be fun, but none specifically, and I am feeling like I want to explore a different, creator-owned direction pretty soon, possibly. I love the licensed characters, but that's what I'm thinking recently.

**Sketch:** So, what's your day like? Is it a tight schedule or something more loose?

**Tim:** It's pretty loose (laughs). I used to be more disciplined. I still draw at least 4-5 hours a day, but it used to be often double that.

**Sketch:** What are some of the tools you use? Any particular brands you prefer?

**Tim:** Ultimately it so often is a matter of personal preference, and everyone needs to decide what's right for themselves, but here's what I have

come to for me:- Winsor & Newton Series 7 brush, #4- Pelikan drawing ink- Faber-Castel Pitt artist pen (felt tip), #S- kneaded eraser- Quicker Clicker mechanical pencil, with HB lead (for comics)- Prismacolor Woodless Graphite #4B pencil (for sketching)

**Sketch:** I would like to know how you approach a page, or even a whole story.

**Tim:** That depends so much on what the writer gives me, but I know that the first thing I do with any script is to determine what is the best approach to serve the story. Theoretically there is a reason the writer and I, specifically, are working on this story, and so we figure out what it is that we each have that can serve the story the best. If I come in late, or at a different point in the process, or if the writer and I haven't been partners in the inspiration and shaping of the project, then I have a more limited approach overall, but the one that I employ on any specific page is still one that I would use, even if I have been more involved. If the story is dark, or is light, or is tragic, or is cynical or is mythic or patriotic, all those themes suggest an approach to me, and I am an artist that enjoys — needs to, really — shift my artistic approach for each story I want to tell. The easiest and clearest example of that is the difference between my approach to **Superman For All Seasons**, right after I came off of **Batman: The Long Halloween**, and



then shifting again to how I approached **Batman: Dark Victory**. Each story dictated that there be a different technique used, and that in turn inspired me all along the way because I wasn't bored and feeling locked in to a personal way of drawing that I must not deviate from. I decide on a visual focal point for each page. My theory is that as someone flips through a book that they should always be able to find something that catches their eye. The easiest way to do that is to have one panel on each page be much

larger than the rest, and I do that a great deal — once you look for that moment to highlight, it is surprising how easy it is to find, for the most part. Sometimes there are pages that the writer will want to set up in a very uniform way, like a whole page of close-ups on a 9-panel grid, for an effect, but that is most often to set up a big payoff in a splashy moment when you turn the page.

**Sketch:** How do you feel about art school and formal training?



**Tim:** I think it's great! Never hurts, and is often beneficial. Not always needed, though. There are many great art schools around, and as we delve further into the digital era, it is easier to imagine the advantages of schooling. I'm considering it myself; there is an excellent art school near me that I think could offer me a lot.

**Sketch:** Do you have favorite titles or creators that you follow?

**Tim:** I actually get to the comics store very infrequently, so the things that inspire me tend to be film and old illustration from the mid 20th century, but there are creators that turn me on tremendously, like **Loeb, Darwyn, Marcos Martin, Niko Henrichon,**

**Juanjo Guarnido, and Mark Chiarello,** now that he is finding time to create art more frequently. His book on the Negro Leagues of baseball was extraordinary, and everyone owes it to themselves to check it out.

**Sketch:** The question is: a full script or a plot: how do you like to work?

**Tim:** Depends, but what I like best is a full script that calls for few panels on a page — like maybe three — so that I can consider it almost a plot that I can manipulate on my own. If the writer and I are working well together, I will know how best to tell the story we want to tell, how best to use my pictures to showcase the story that we both have in mind. If he or she leaves me with that room, that

is what I like best, and I think that is what takes the most advantage of what I have to offer.

**Sketch:** How do you feel about inking?

**Tim:** Love it! Why? Love doing it, and love seeing what other people do as well. It's becoming a lost skill in these times, which would make me sadder if there wasn't so much incredible digital art happening.

**Sketch:** Do you still have mentors in the business after all this time?

**Tim:** Mentors? No, I suppose not. There are people in the industry that have been so in the past, that are not so any longer and that is regretful, but I am a big boy now. What I need is collaboration.



**Sketch:** How do you feel about being an influence yourself?

**Tim:** I imagine I'd love it, but I don't see it. Show me! Fun!

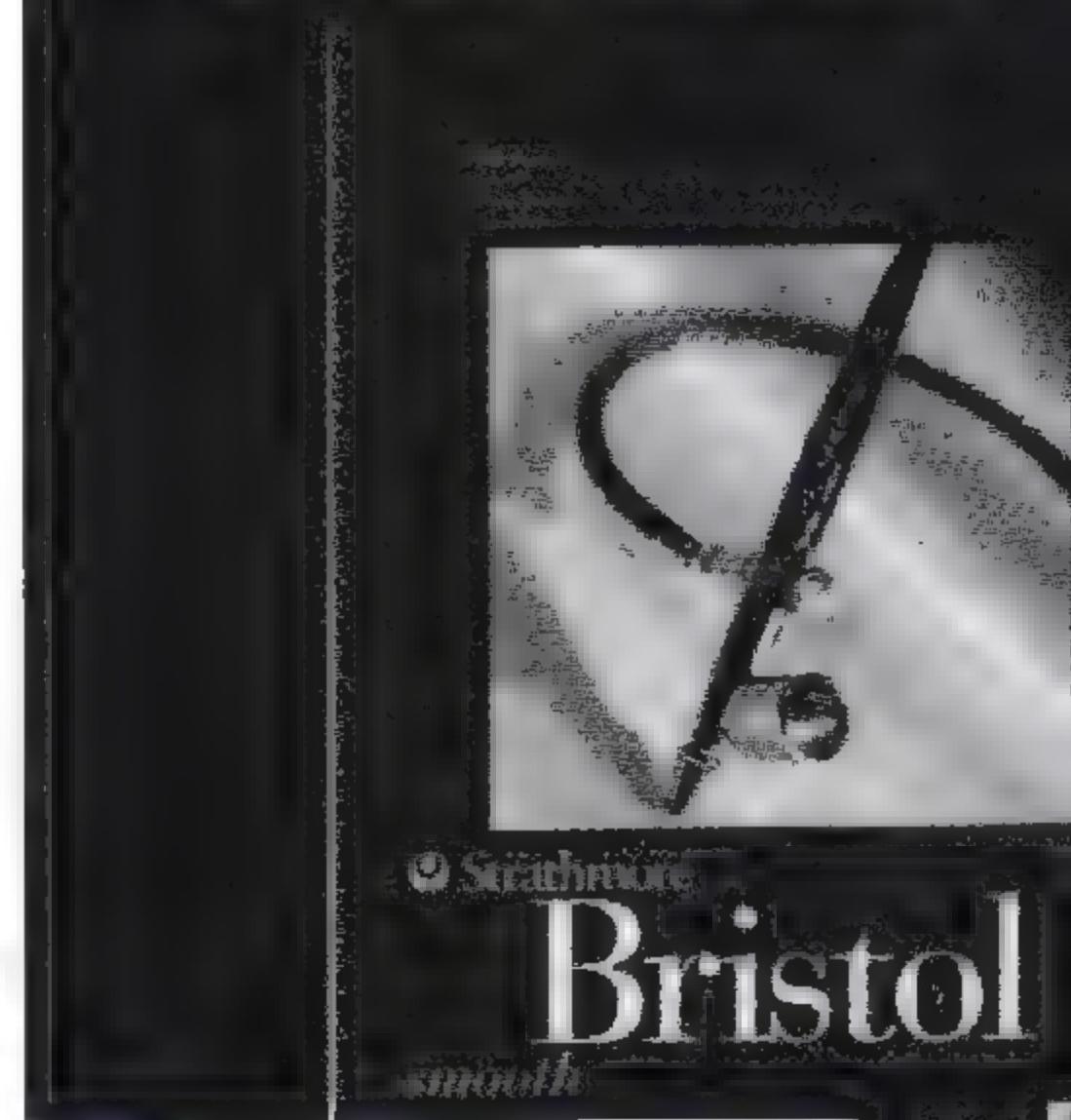
**Sketch:** What's the easiest part of all this?

**Tim:** This interview? That it's on computer and I can swear up a storm and you will have to edit it out.

**Sketch:** The hardest?

**Tim:** Oh, wait, did you not mean this interview? You mean a career as a comics artist? Well, the easiest thing, and the best and most amazing thing, is when all things are clicking, and when you feel that you are part of a group that is excited about doing the best work possible. When you and your pals are

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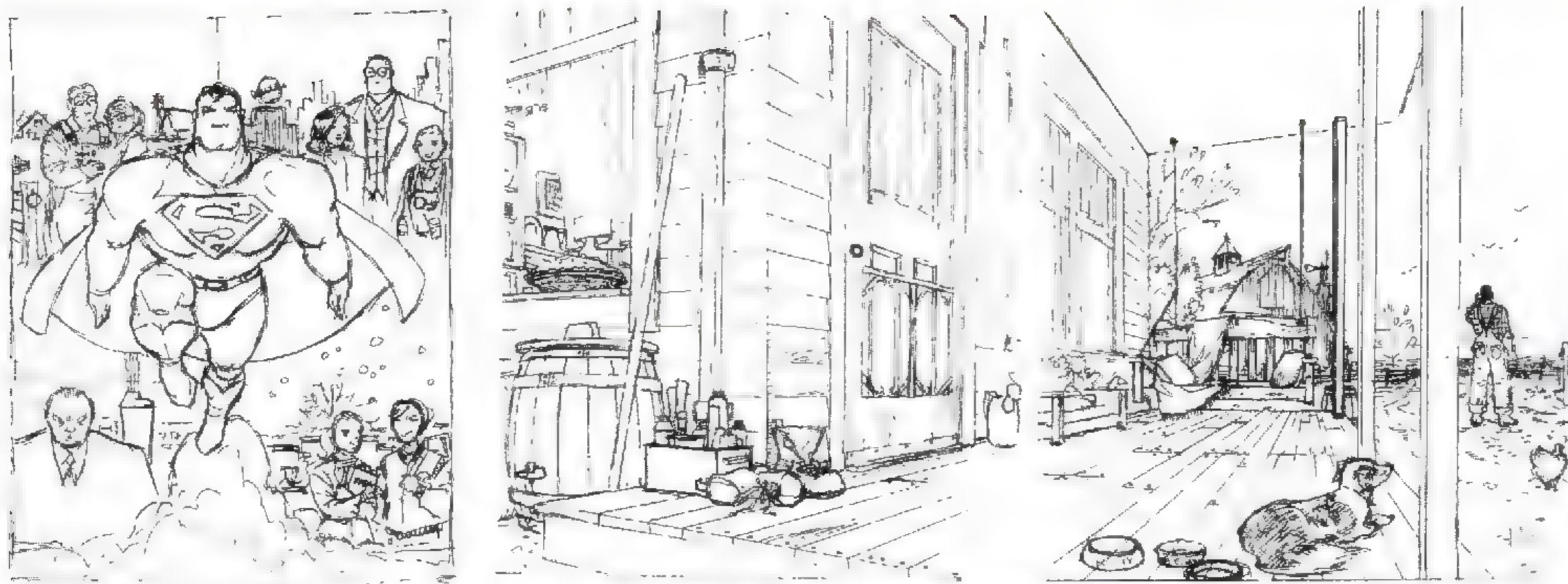


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Illustrations from *Superman for All Seasons*.See more of Tim's illustration at [SKETCHMAGAZINE.NET](http://SKETCHMAGAZINE.NET).

together doing what you love, and what you think is quality work. The worst is when you don't have any of that, and you are just trying your best to grind it out every day.

**Sketch:** From the start to the finish, how much does a project change or grow? What influences that?

**Tim:** That differs on each project, but for most of my career, other than my craft

getting better during the time it takes to complete the story, I have to say that the story that was in our heads at the beginning, I felt was realized at the end. It's been pretty remarkable.

**Sketch:** What is something you'd like to share about yourself with the readers of Sketch Magazine?

**Tim:** Making a living by being creative is a blessing. It has

its own specific set of challenges, but it is an incredibly fulfilling way of making the most out of life. Or did you mean hobbies? Like that? I love dogs, cooking (and eating), soccer, and women that can overcome society's pressure to be thin and love their curves. Thanks, guys!

**Sketch:** Thank you, Tim!





We all have dreams that seem impossible, like Morty Coyle's secret infatuation with star cheerleader Susana in "Dead Kid," but how we choose to think about our dreams and how we pursue them can make a big difference in just how close we come to realizing them.

## **How to Chase Your Dreams Without Crashing Into Reality**

### **The Universe at Your Finger Tips Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books**

by Tom Bierbaum

Since we were little children, we've all heard people say that if you pursue your dreams and work hard enough, anything is possible.

And while I'm not here to say that isn't true, I do want to talk about a problem inherent in that message. To get by in life, you've got to be gainfully employed, and for every single job that people dream about having, there are probably thousands of people dreaming about having exactly that one job. And at the same time, there are seemingly an infinite number of jobs out there that nobody's dreaming about having. So if we're all pursuing our dreams, who gets those very few jobs we're all dreaming about and who gets those jobs nobody's dreaming about?

Comic writing certainly falls into the former category — for every really viable job writing comics, there are probably thousands and thousands of people dreaming of holding it. And even more than that, your dream may be to write for a particular company, or with a

particular artist or on a particular title. The odds of fulfilling that kind of very specific dream might be astronomical. So what do you do? Keep trying and trying against virtually impossible odds? Give up on the dream? Either way, it seems like pursuing a big dream is really just a way to set yourself up for misery.

I'm actually probably one of those very rare examples of somebody who got to realize about as specific a dream as you could have. I grew up reading DC's "Legion of Super-Heroes" and became a really big fan of the concept when I was about 16. I eventually got the chance to write that series for about five years in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

But my good fortune in realizing that dream had more to do with luck and coincidence than amazing talent or obsessive pursuit of my dream. And if anything, I think I'm less likely than most people to encourage others to single-mindedly follow some similar dream of their own.

I think there's a better way to dream, and it's a way that can help you in all aspects of your life.

It's a pretty simple concept – instead of dreaming about doing exactly the thing you want to do, dream about finding symbiotic relationships where you team up with people who really like what you have to offer and who have to offer what you're really looking for.

Symbiosis is that scientific term for species that manage to co-exist in ways that benefit both species. We all know about predatory relationships between species – where one animal literally devours another – and parasitic relationships – where one ani-

mal lives off the resources of another, to the detriment of the host species.

A lot of people pursue their dreams in a predatory or parasitic way. They see who has the job they want and try to get it away from them, as a predator would. Or they're just hoping to get some dream job that's great for them and aren't really interested in whether or not it's a good situation for the employer or the audience – they don't mind being a parasite that gets what it wants at the expense of others.

So what we're talking about is the difference between dreaming about doing exactly what you want to do in comics and dreaming about doing something that really works for you, your employer and the buying public.

A fairly common distinction between people who wish they could achieve big success in this business and people who actually achieve it is the ability to be outward-directed – to put yourself in the readers' place and really be driven by the need to give them not what you feel like giving them but what works for them. Think of a comedian up on a stage who gets very definitive feedback when he gives the audience what works for them – they laugh – as opposed to when he gives the audience what HE thinks is funny in defiant contrast to what the audience itself thinks is funny – they don't laugh.

While the feedback isn't as immediate or definitive in comics, the dynamic is largely the same. If you feel like your taste is the only good taste and it's up to the audience to appreciate what you want to give them, you're likely to end up being the unloved comic-book equivalent of that comedian standing up on the stage getting no laughs.

This doesn't mean pander or be predictable or formulaic or repetitive (none of which is what the audience ever actually wants), it means that you'll probably get further if you're ultimately more interested in satisfying your audience than your own impulses. This should always involve you doing inspired work, reaching into yourself to do things that truly excite you as a creator. It should always involve surprising the readers and taking them in directions they never knew would satisfy them — but as a partner who gets satisfaction. Not as a single-minded auteur imposing your vision on the reader, but as a creator who loves to connect with the reader.

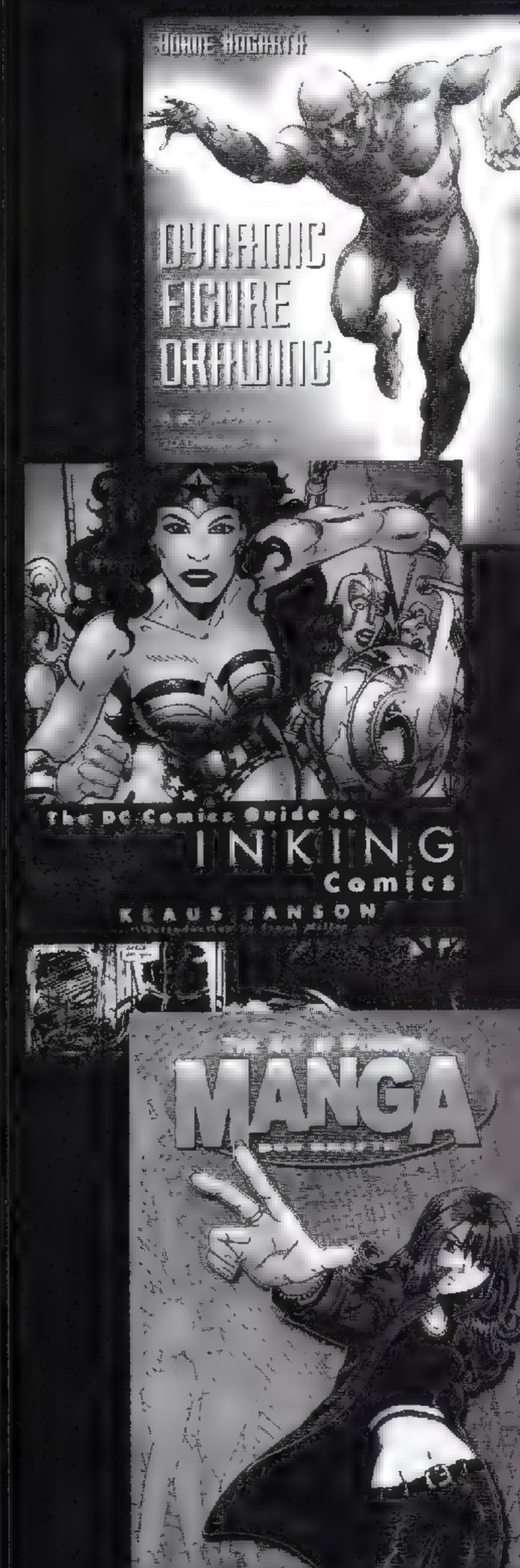
There's only one job as Legion writer, but there are dozens of jobs for writers who know how to deliver a good, readable comic-book story no matter what the concept might be. And there are many, many other jobs for people who like getting paid to write all kinds of things that communicate effectively and meet the needs of an audience.

So identify what it is about your ultimate dream that makes it right for you and find ways to inject some of those elements into the assignments you get along the way. With the Legion, for example, I liked the large cast, the diversity of characters and the strong message of optimism and hope for the future the Legion embodied, and have often tried to include those kind of elements in other projects I've been involved in.

In my case, the fact that I dreamt not of writing the Legion but of doing comics that embodied what I liked about the Legion may have helped get me that dream-come-true assignment of actually writing the Legion. If my wife and I had been specifically and aggressively pursuing the Legion assignment itself, we might have looked too fannish and ambitious and scared off the people who ultimately hired us. (As it was, we fought a lot of prejudice among people who saw us as nothing more than Legion fans trying to write, rather than "real writers," which was something beyond our control, so we didn't worry about it and just tried to do good work and prove those people wrong.)

This way of looking at your creative ambitions is something that can help you in virtually all aspects of your

## ARTBOOKS



life — your job, your love life, how you deal with your family and friends and just about anything else that matters — you can either look at life as a test of your ability to grab what you want by imposing your will on other people — we'll call this the aggressive approach — or you can look at life as a search for relationships where what you have to offer is what your partner wants and what your partner has to offer is what you want — we'll call this the cooperative approach.

The aggressive approach revolves around the assertion of power and it puts people in conflict with each other to grab the good stuff and stick other people with the bad stuff. The cooperative approach creates situations where everybody benefits and everybody decides for themselves what they want and how to get it, as long as they can find the right mutually beneficial relationships to make it possible.

My observation is that people who use the aggressive approach can be, in very small percentages, successful, but those few successes spread resentment and unhappiness wherever they go. And the vast majority in the aggressive camp do not meet with success and instead spend their lives moving from conflict to conflict and feeling disappointment and shame that they weren't somehow macho enough to impose their will on the world and get what they wanted.

I'm not sure people who use the cooperative approach are necessarily more successful than people who use the aggressive approach, but they sure seem to get through life with fewer conflicts and they look like they're happier because of it.

As a side note, I think this is a great way to define the "good guys" and the "bad

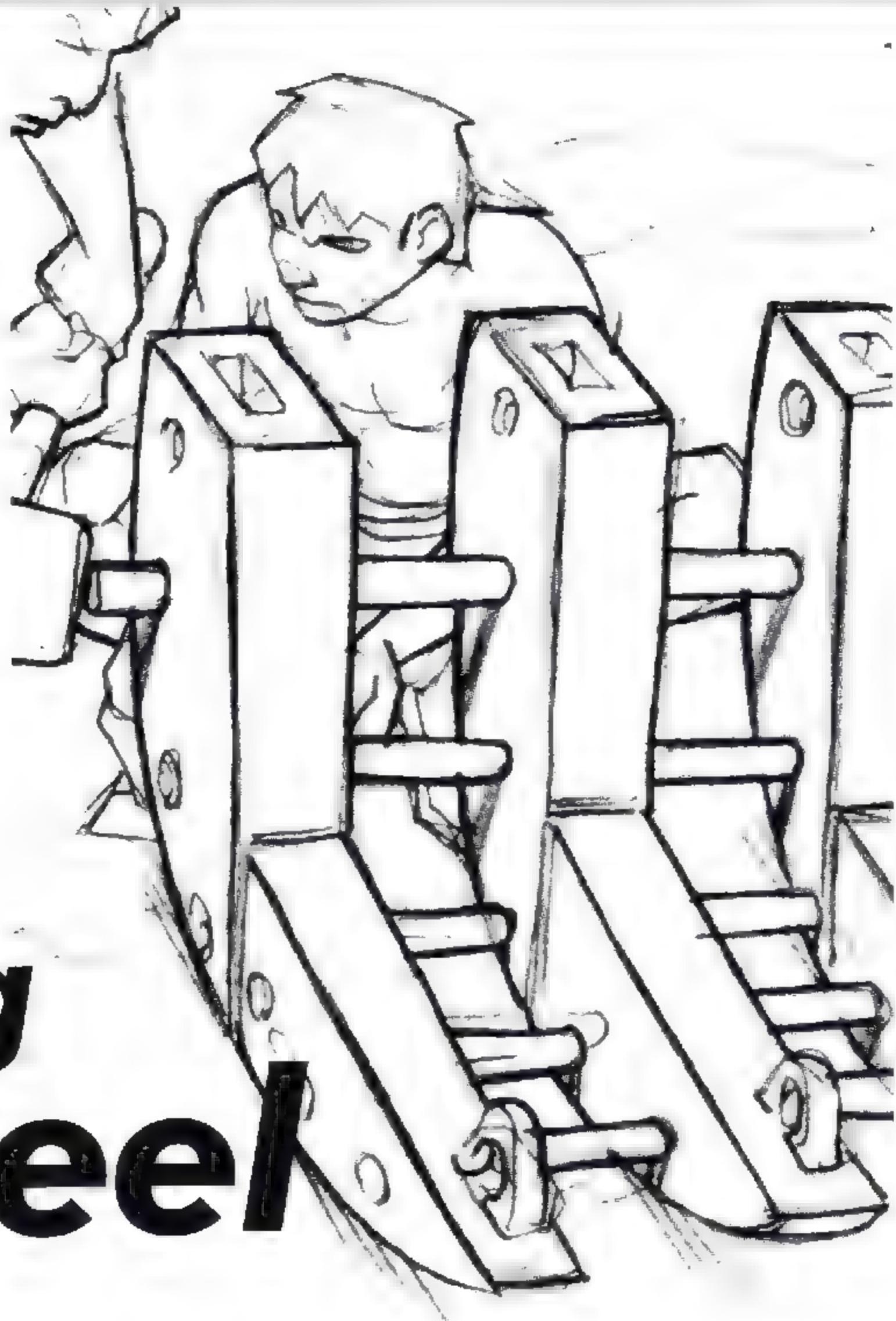
guys" in any comic-book universe you're depicting. There's a genuine and important conflict in the real world between those who seek to impose their will on the world and those who seek to protect everyone's right to pursue their own lives as they see fit and get what they want out of life through cooperative, mutually beneficial arrangements.

And here's a real-world example of how the cooperative approach can help you deal with the comic-book business as it actually exists. I remember talking with a promising young writer who'd done a lot of work for a seemingly very professional company at a certain page rate, only to find out later on that he was being paid woefully less than the going rate at any of the top comic-book companies. This writer felt some resentment, as if it was a mistake to give away his work at such an uncompetitive rate.

But honestly, taking that low-paying job was, at that time, a mutually beneficial relationship. Yes, you were getting underpaid by industry standards, but you were also getting experience, exposure, a credit and the chance to make connections. It worked for you and it worked for your penny-pinching employer. And then the minute the bigger companies start seeing that it's in their interest to hire you and give you those bigger page rates, do it. Both sides will be benefiting and it will be thanks to what you got out of that earlier lesser-paying job where you were meeting another company's different set of needs.

It's an example of how you never know when and where your dreams might be fulfilled, and of how getting little pieces of dream-fulfillment along the way is part of what can make it happen.

Sketch



# Inventing the Wheel

## Notes to Draw From

by Mitch Byrd

You know, the person who invented the wheel probably just rolled it up to the village and amazed everyone there. And when those people described that event in later years, more than a couple "Witnesses of the Wheel" probably remarked on a universal trait of human behavior, that being: "When we saw Og roll that newfangled wheel into the village, Og sure looked like he knew what he was doing."

Now, I don't know if Og invented the wheel, or if it was Og's sister, but whoever did, they probably looked like they knew what they were doing. When people make things or use tools, they develop familiarity with the things they make or use on a regular basis. They look very much at ease around those things that might seem very alien to other people.

So, draw them that way.

If a character is unfamiliar with a car then make sure you put unease into the body language of that character and vice versa. A New York City cab driver is probably going to look like the shift change can't roll around on the clock too soon with the actual driving of the cab appearing as second nature. It's the time clock that's important; the Mets have a home game, you know.

When we first picked up a power tool in shop class, few can deny that it looked like we were picking up a rattlesnake. And then there are those who really can pick up rattlesnakes and make it look as though they are handling just another power tool. Go figure.



Don't you see little man, my massive physique is complemented usually when I open a beverage can thusly. I am indeed, magnificent .

And when you open the beverage can *thusly* , it complements my mental capacity , usually.

If you are going to draw characters convincingly, then convince the reader that your characters know what they are doing. Animate them without making them look as if they are going to tear a muscle pouring a cup of coffee. Pouring a cup of coffee might be an action, but generally that particular action does not require an action pose.

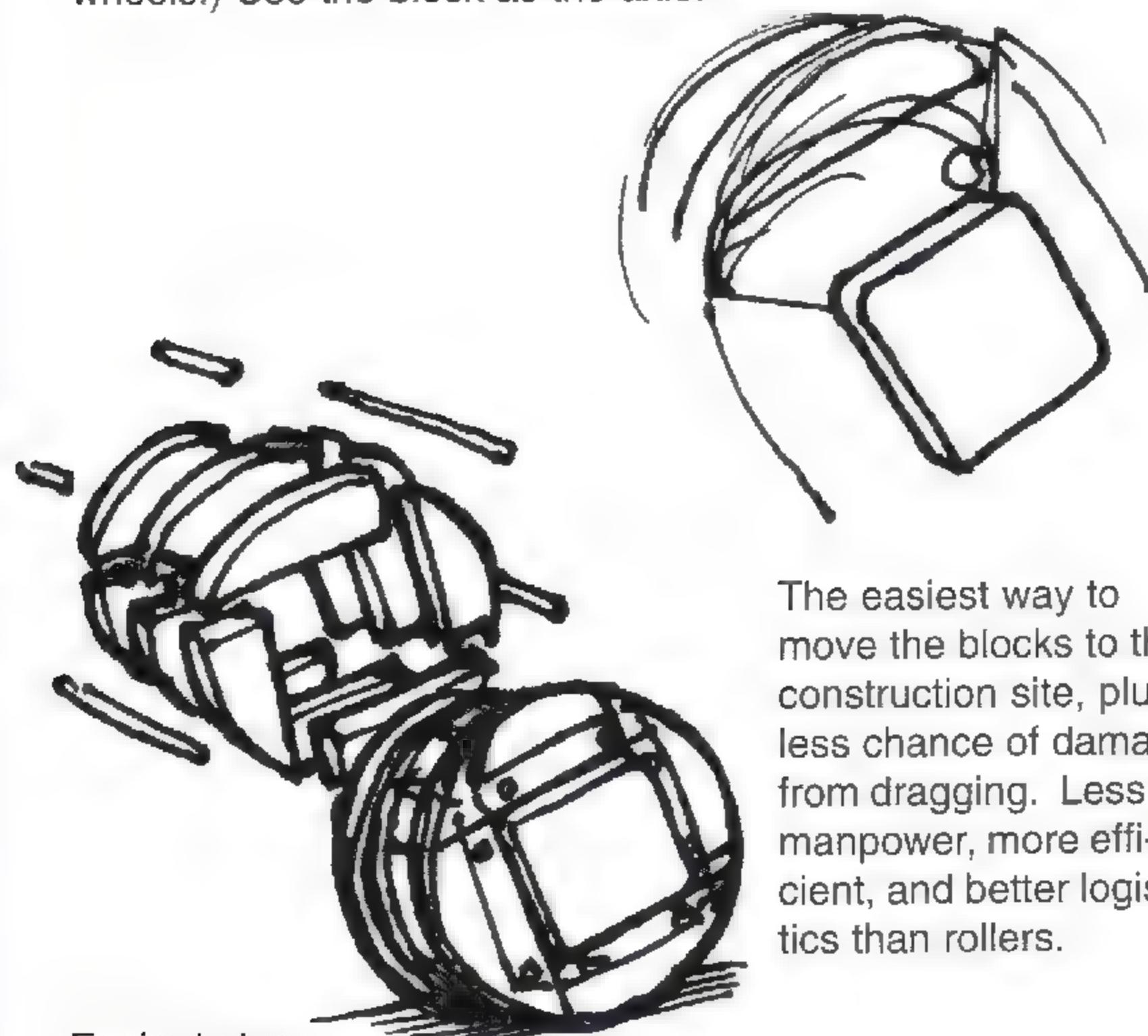
For instance, I have convinced myself that the Egyptians moved stone blocks to their construction sites by simply building wheels around them and then just rolling the blocks to site, like rolling around barrels.

Note Figure 2 from my, uh, well, notes...If I'm going to illustrate this notion in a comics story then I had better understand how it works, right? Then I can draw the character's understanding from my own. A little method drawing, I suppose.

Figure 2.

### Rolling blocks

Build wheel forms around pyramid blocks and roll them around rather than drag them. (They had chariots. Chariots had wheels.) Use the block as the axle.



The easiest way to move the blocks to the construction site, plus less chance of damage from dragging. Less manpower, more efficient, and better logistics than rollers.

Easier to turn.  
Instead of fifty men pulling the block, two could roll it on the even ground.

### Note:

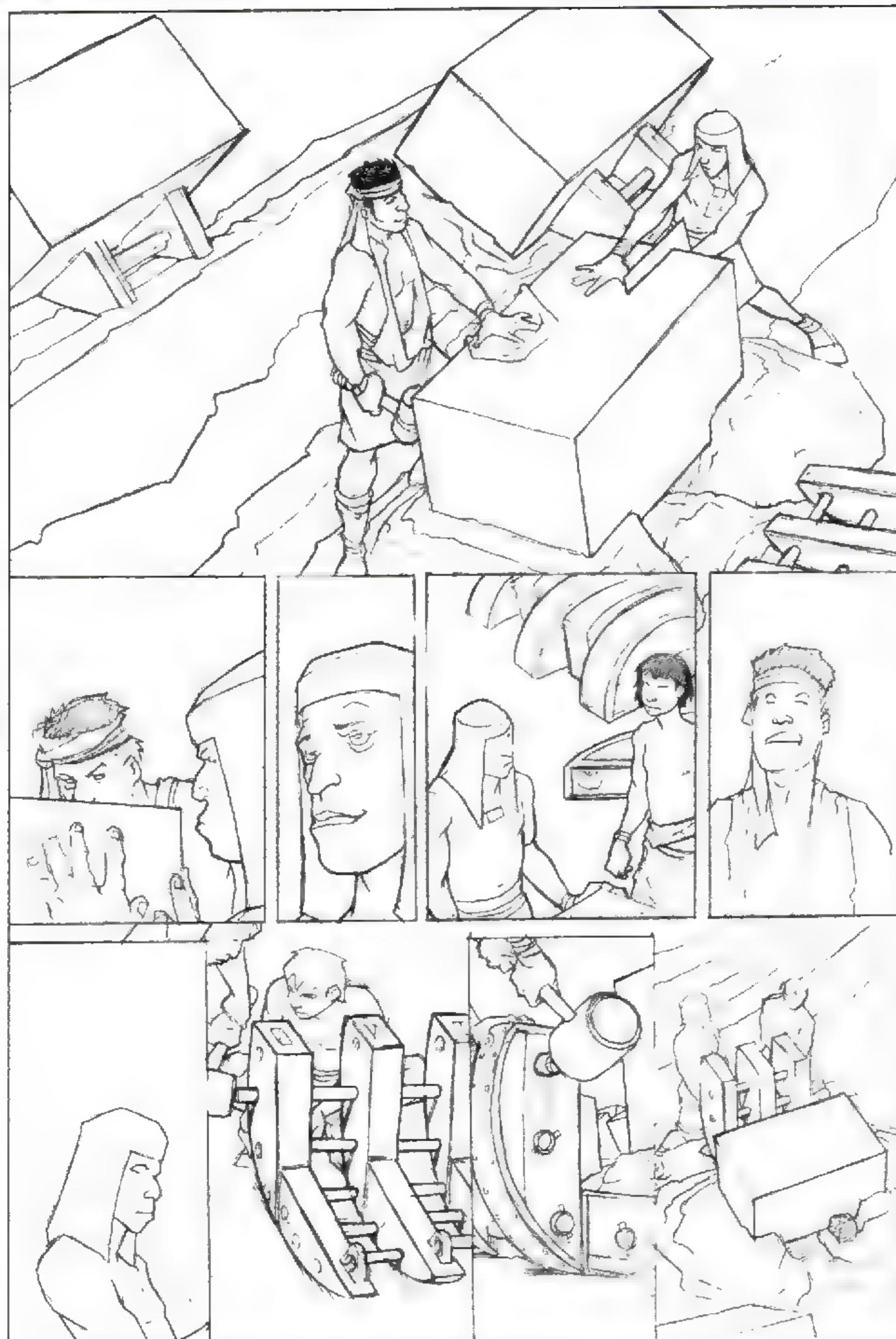
The Egyptians probably took it for granted that people would know that moving blocks to site would be done in the most simple fashion and would illustrate the blocks in hieroglyphics rather than method. Don't show wheel form moving to the site show the blocks inside them.

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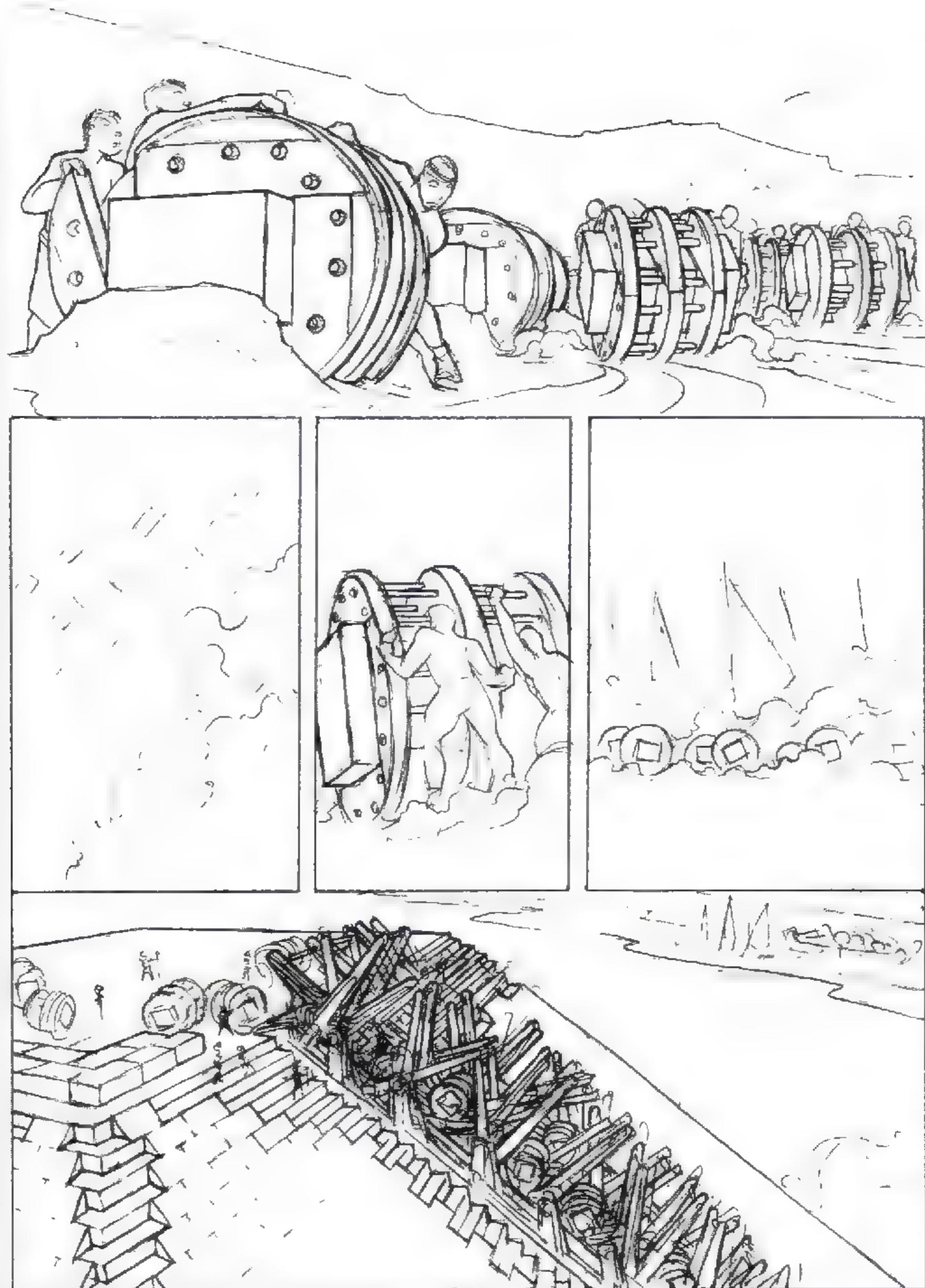
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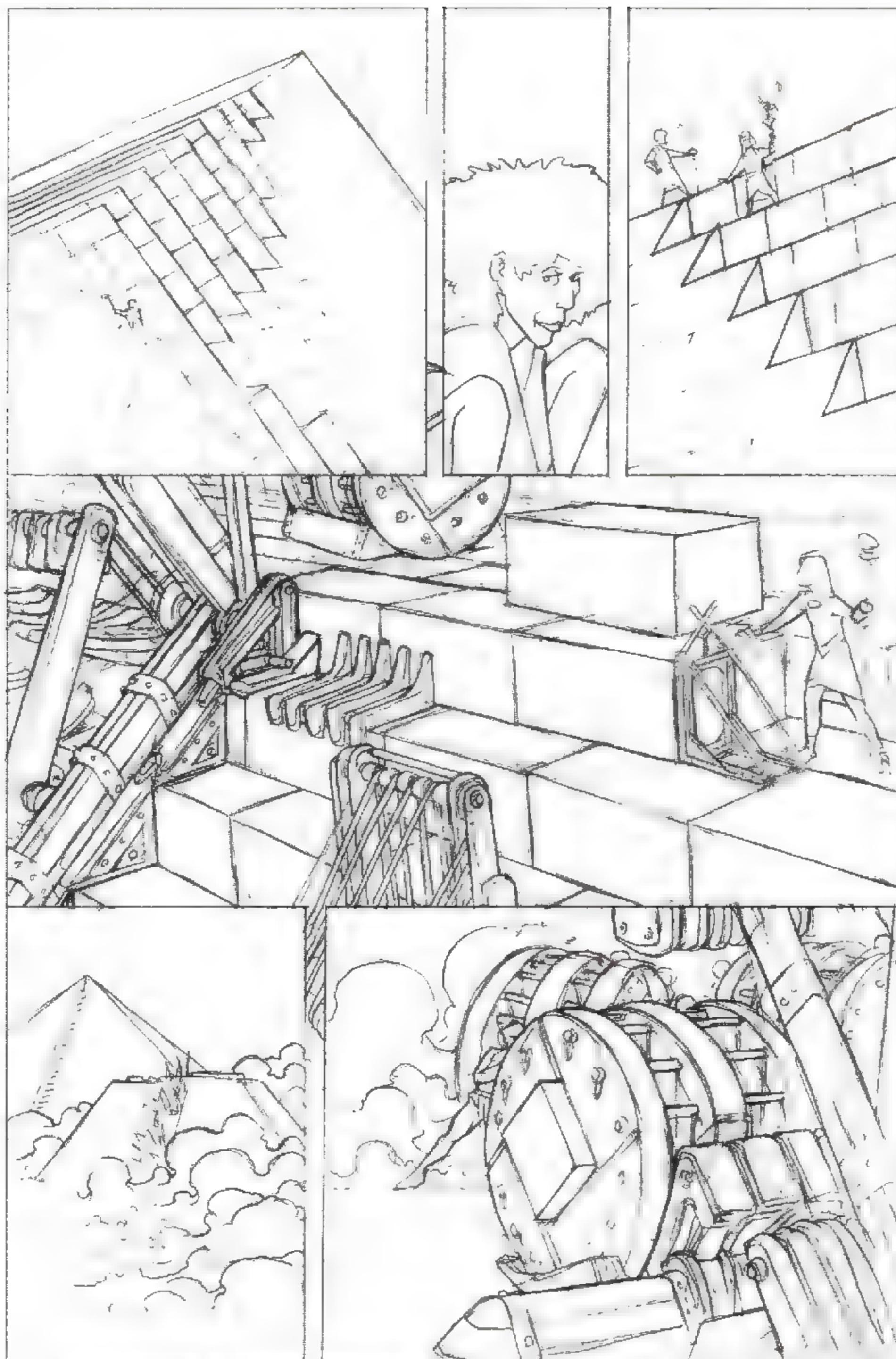


In Figure 3, the characters are interacting with each other over the subject of the block. The stonecutter wants to get it approved by the inspector. Now, the inspector has an important job but he's probably inspected thousands of blocks, I have to find a balance between professional diligence and bored automatic performance. Sleepy-eyed banter helps give them the appearance of familiarity with their daily tasks. The characters don't move about hysterically, but carry out their tasks with economy of action.



If I draw the characters performing their actions with steady assurance, then what they do within the story becomes more believable. We want to make them convincing, right?

In Figure 4, I hopefully convince the reader that the "rolling stone" method of moving blocks to the pyramids was much easier than dragging them over rollers with large teams of men. The characters perform the actions of building "wheel forms" around the blocks and rolling them to the site, but I won't convince anyone this method is correct if I can't draw the characters at ease with the simple task. We go nuts trying to move one block today, but back then the workers were so underwhelmed by their methods that they didn't bother to record how they did it. Probably old hat to those folks. They more than likely would get a huge laugh out of modern man's inability to figure out how they built the pyramids.



If the characters in your story have something to do, then let them do it like they've done it before...

Remember, there's more than one pyramid in Egypt. Someone must have known what they were doing.

Sketch

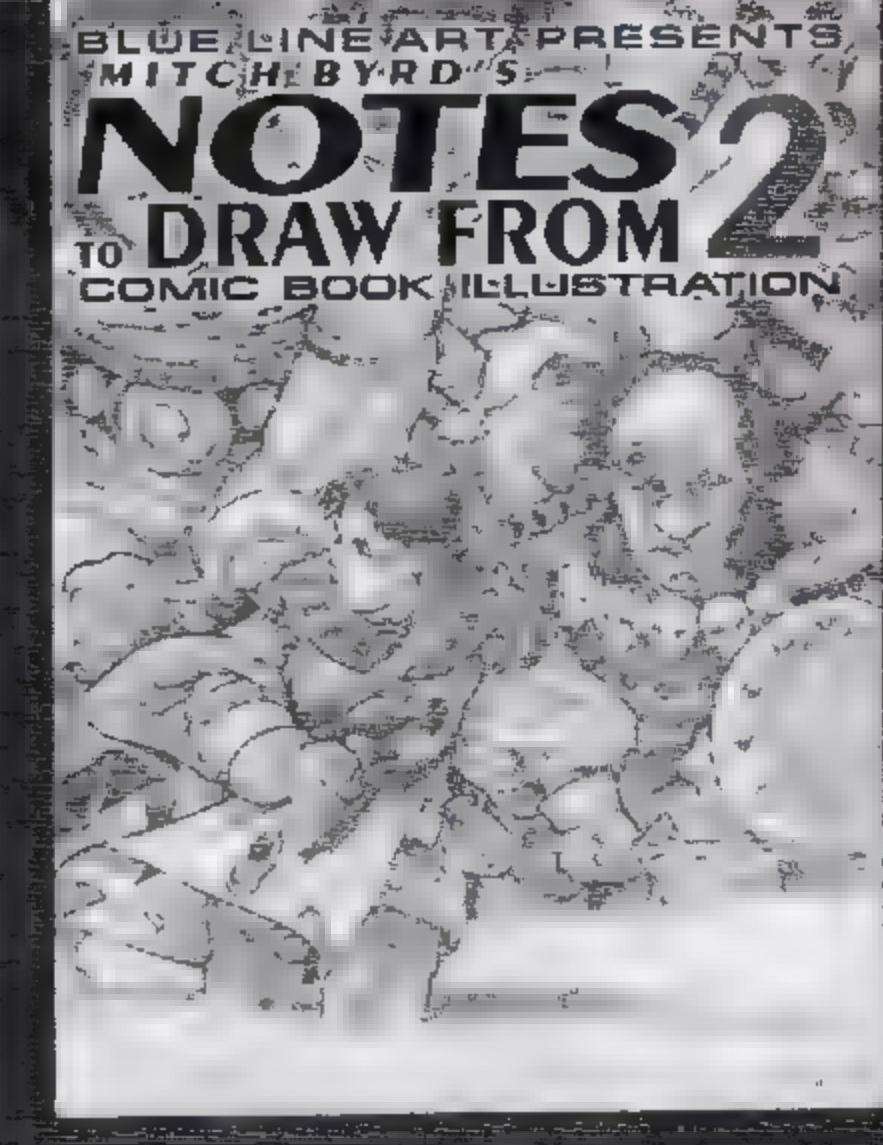
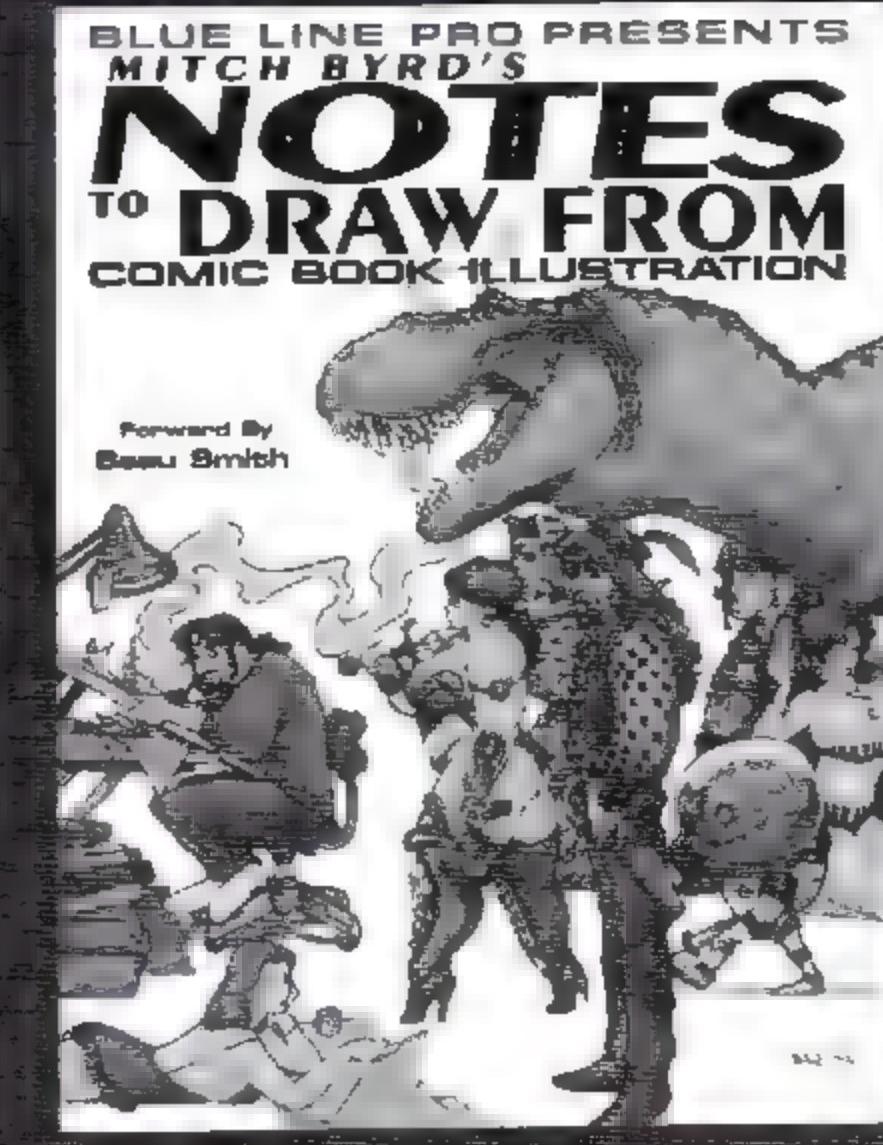
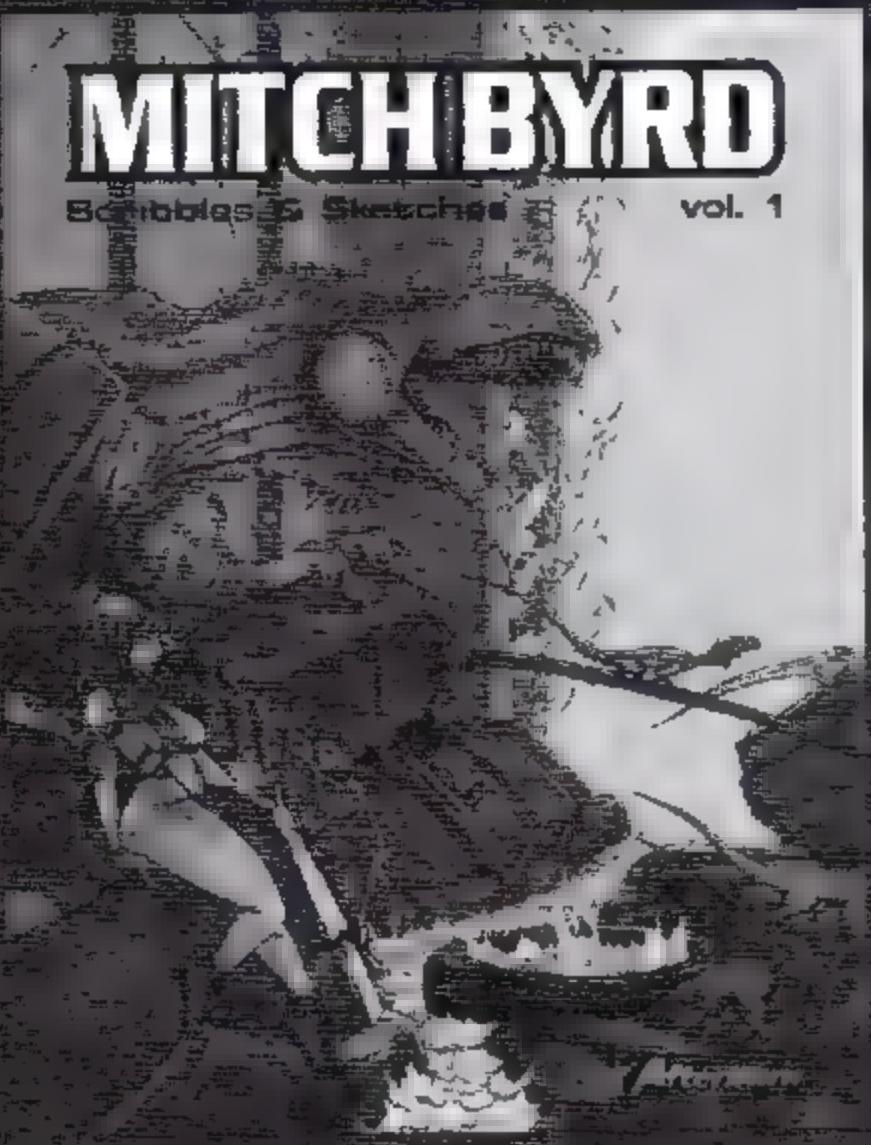
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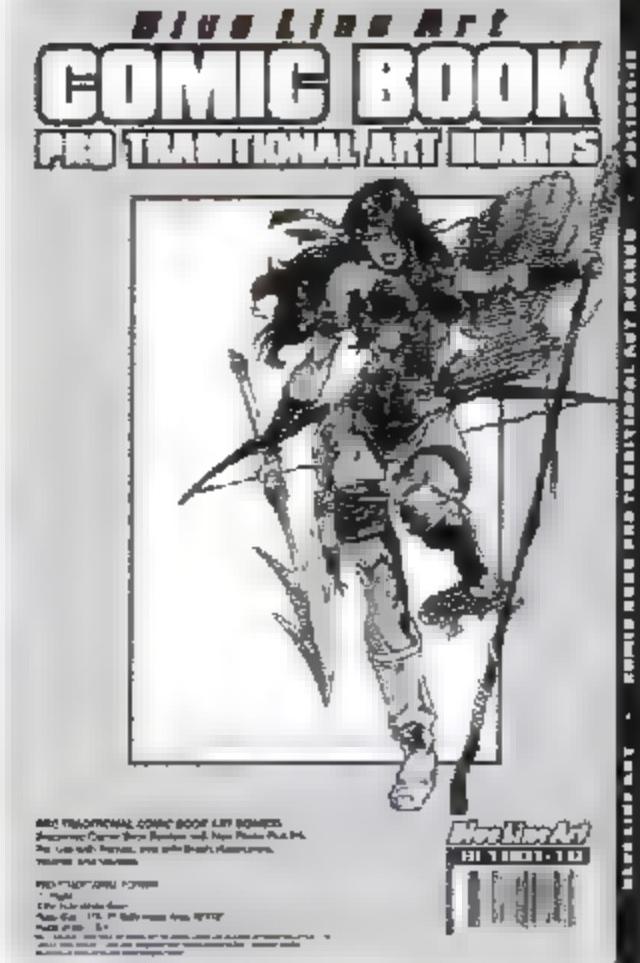
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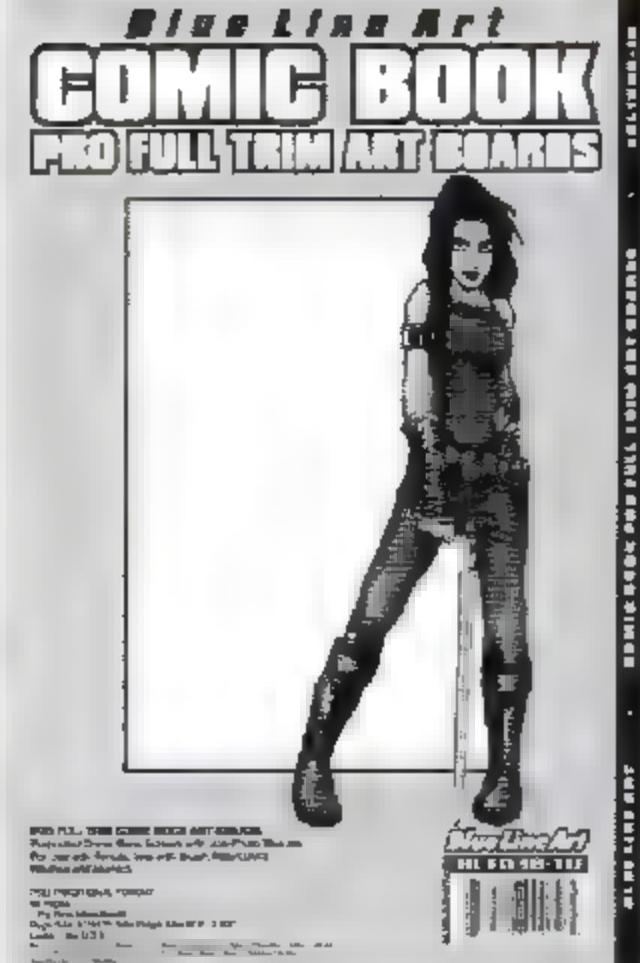
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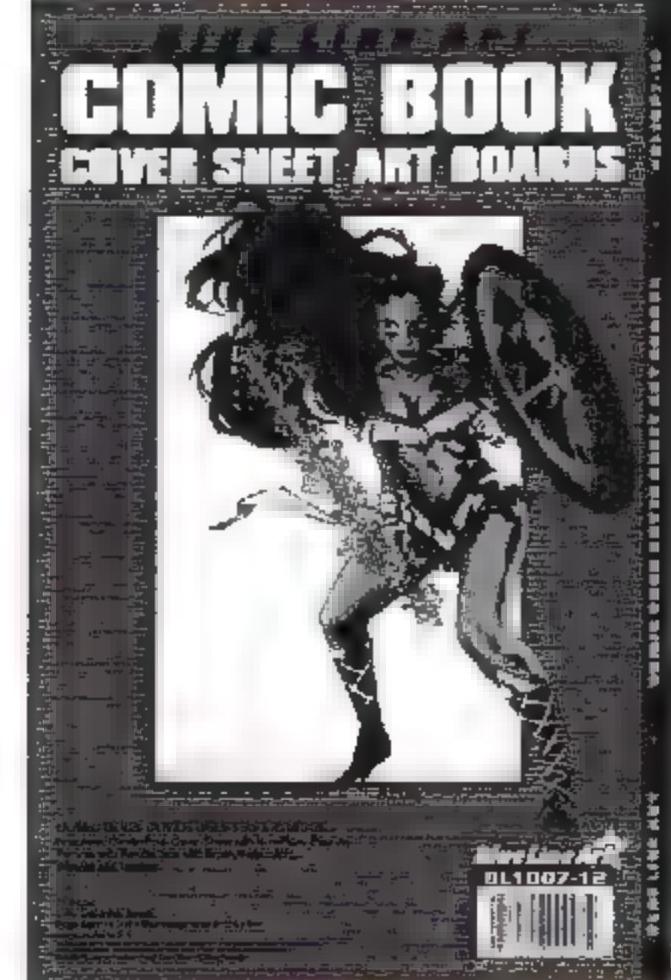
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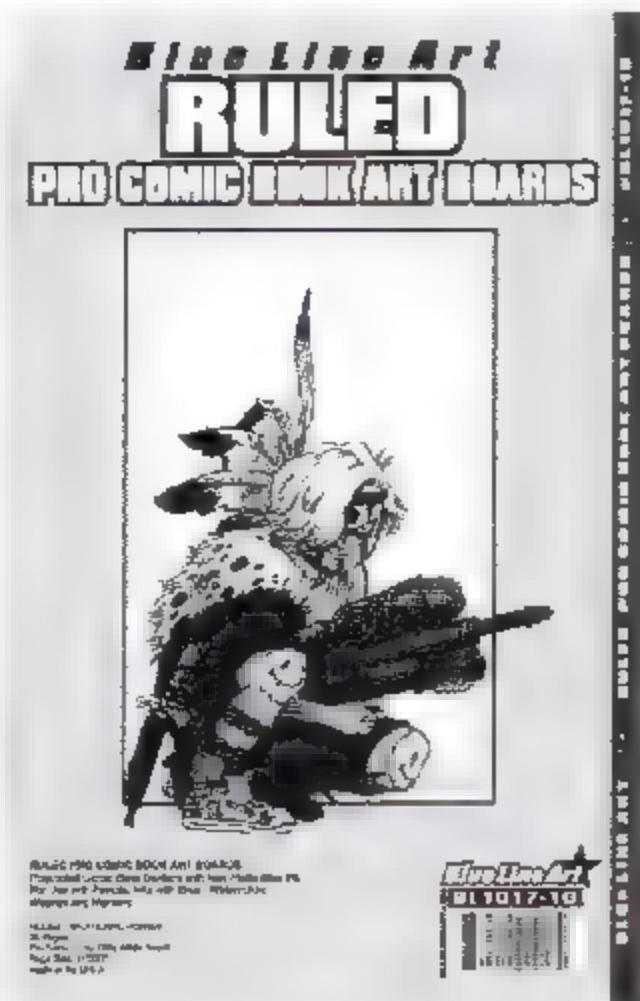
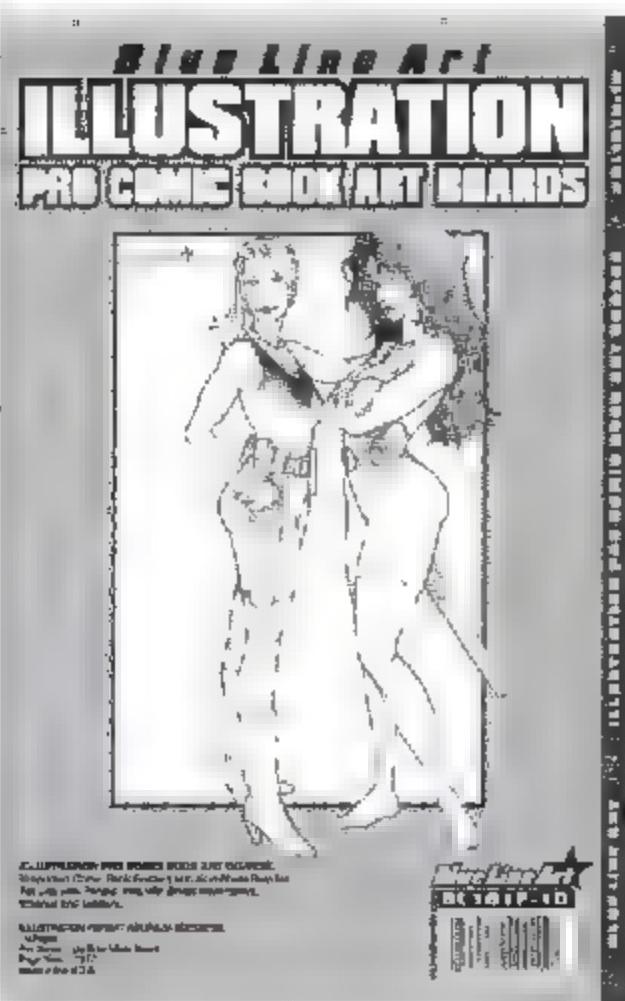
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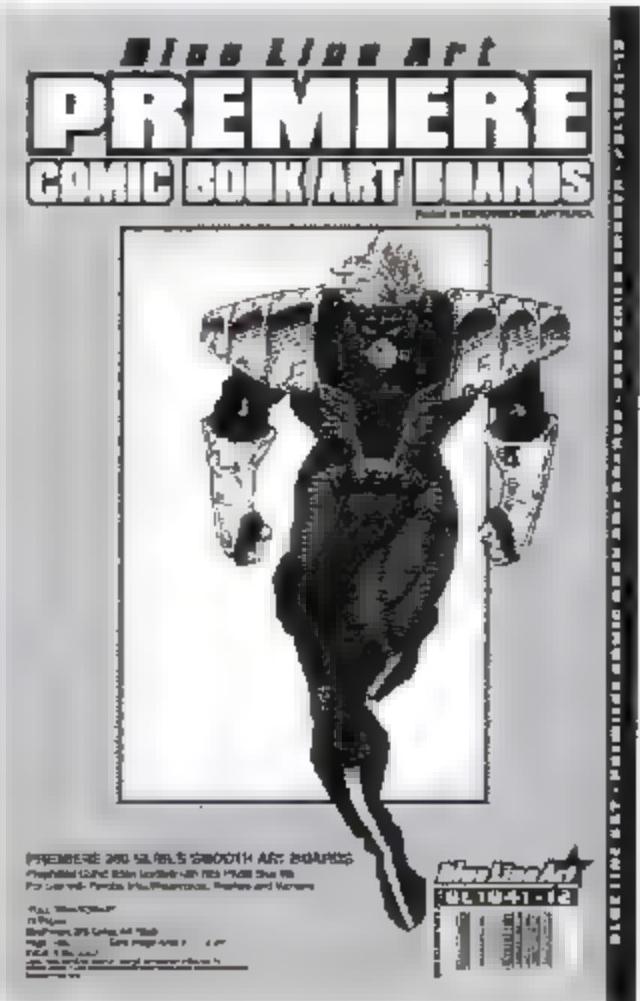
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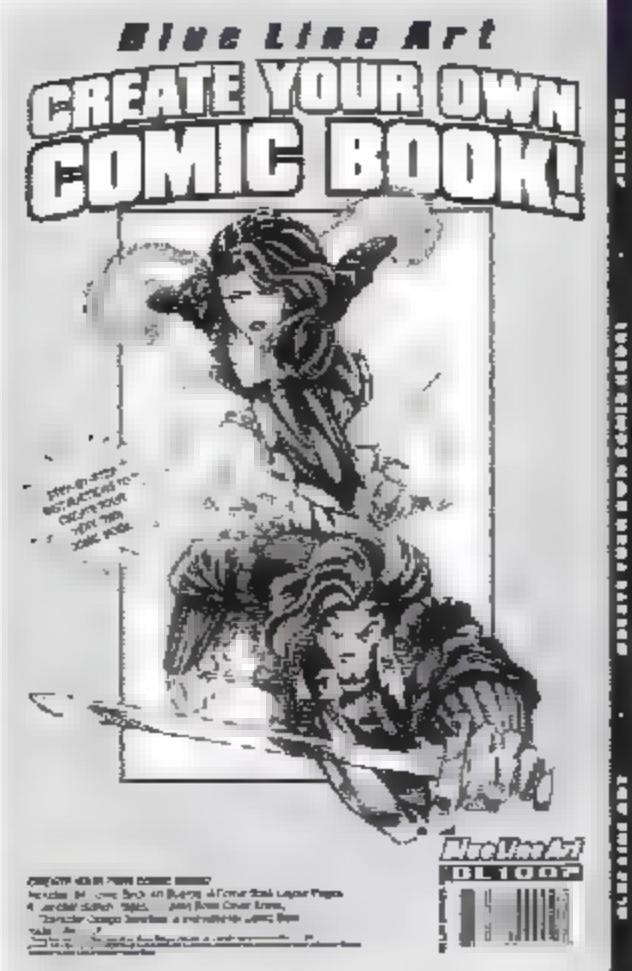
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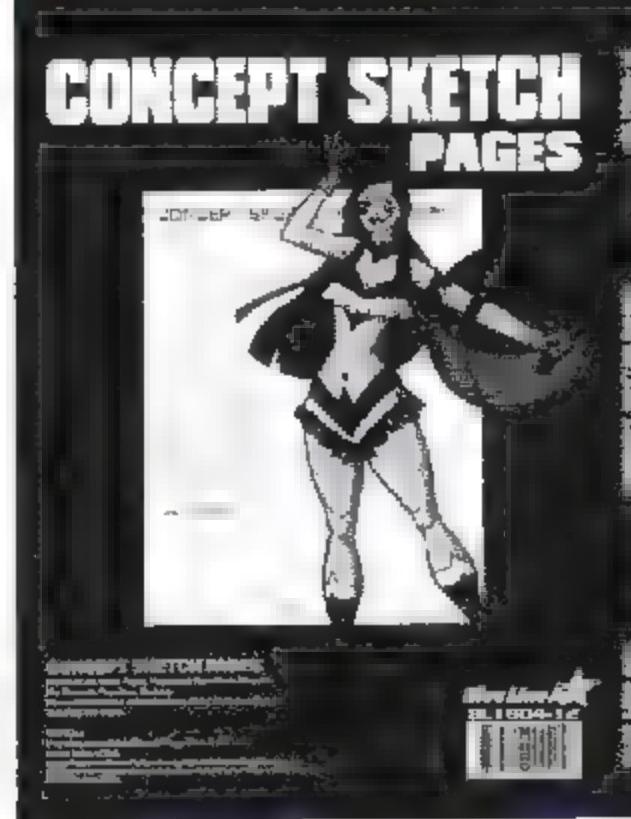
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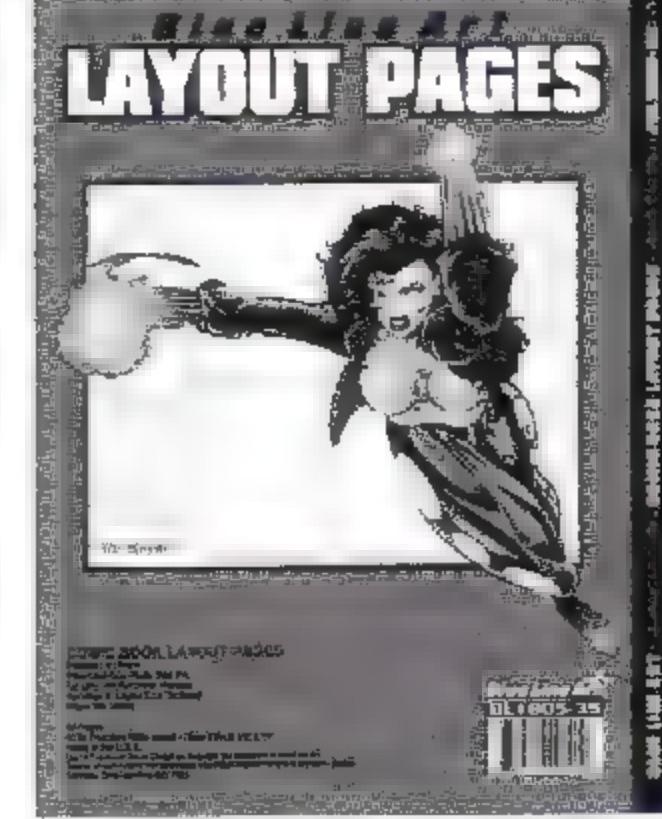
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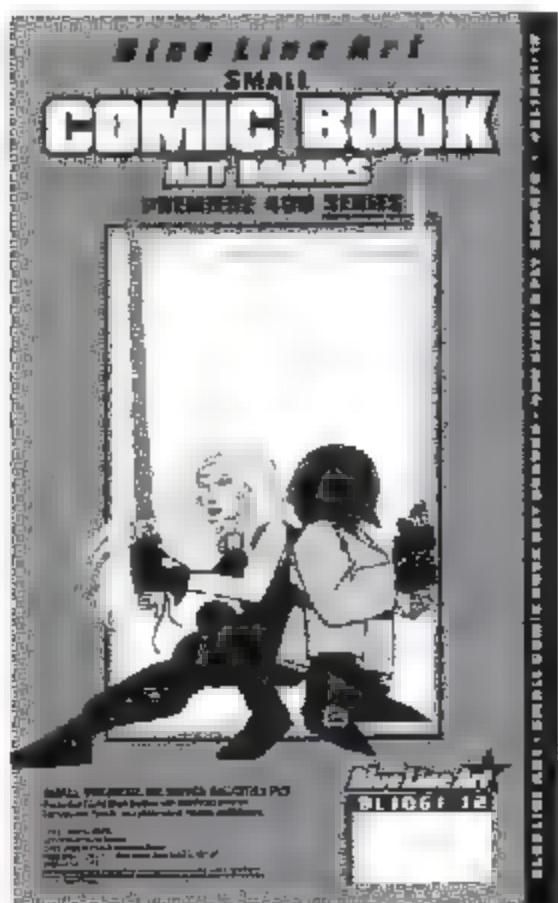
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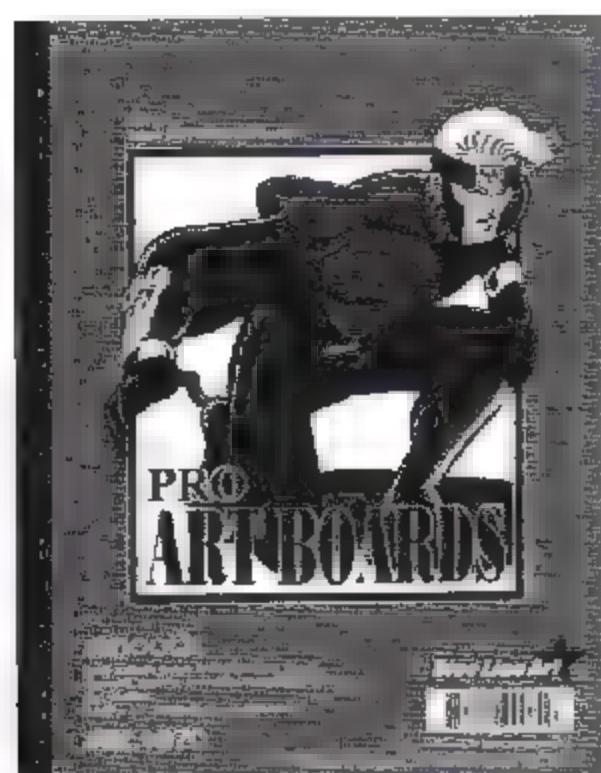
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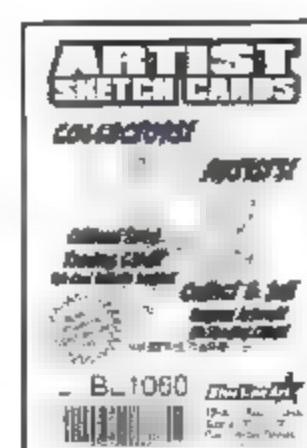
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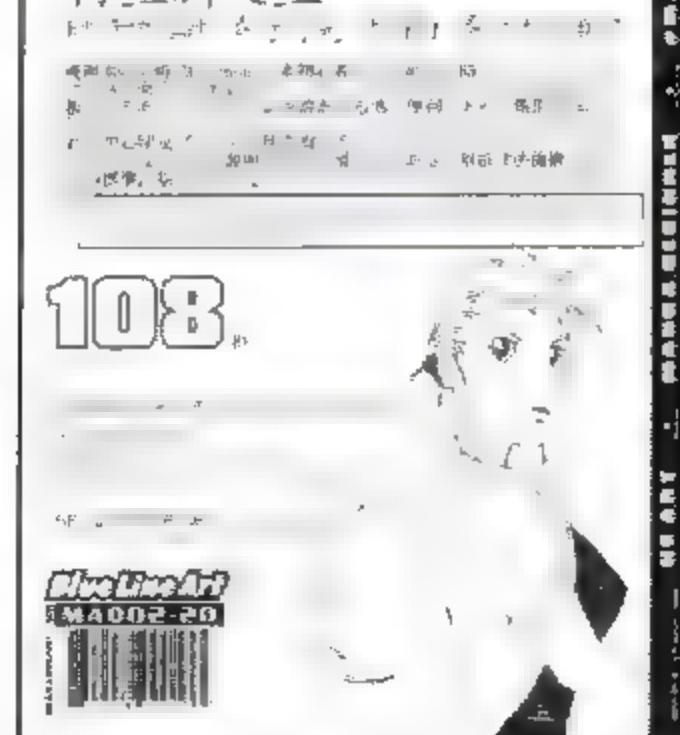


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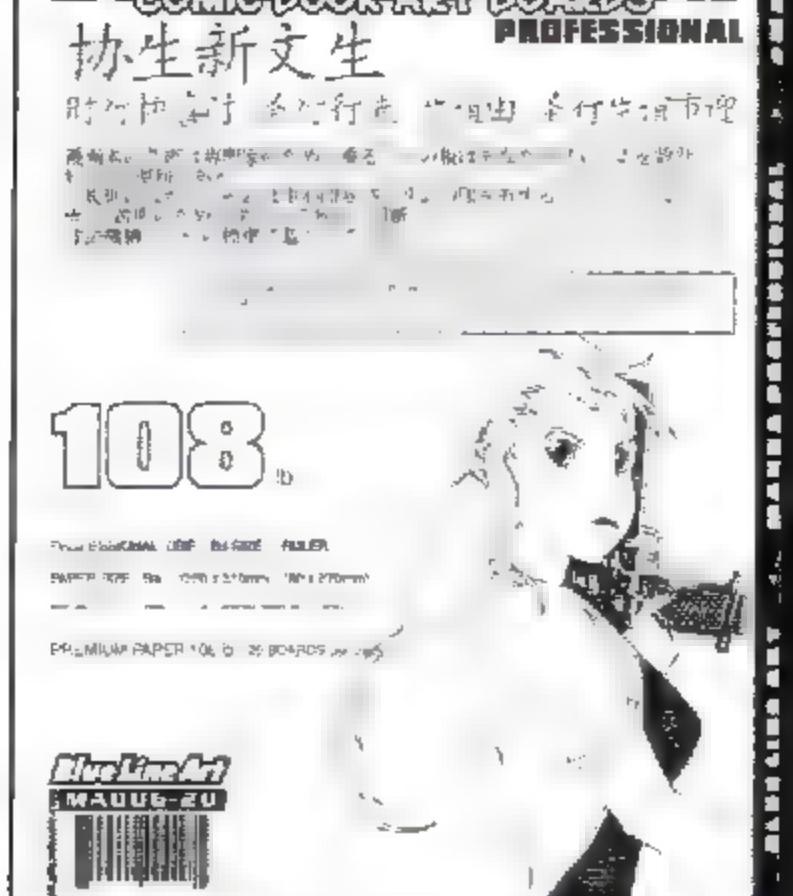


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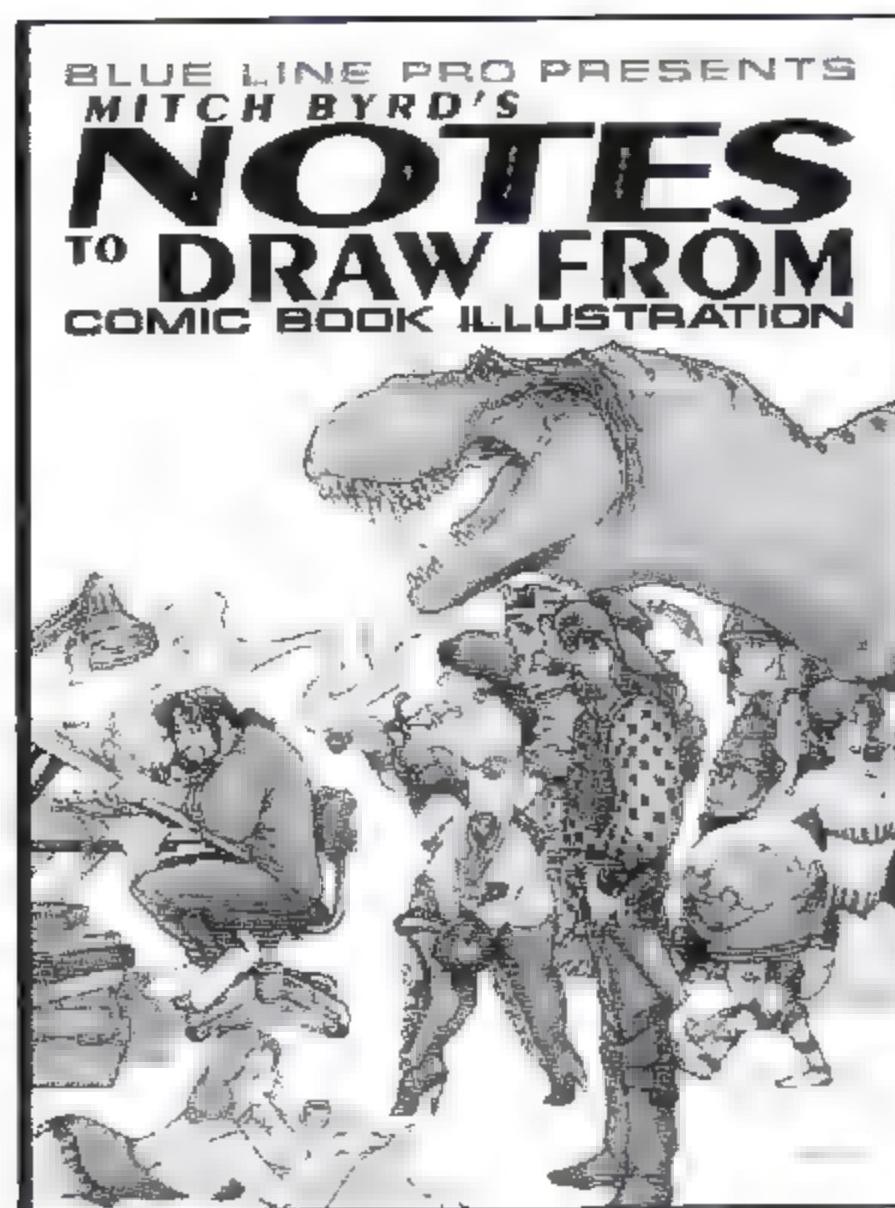
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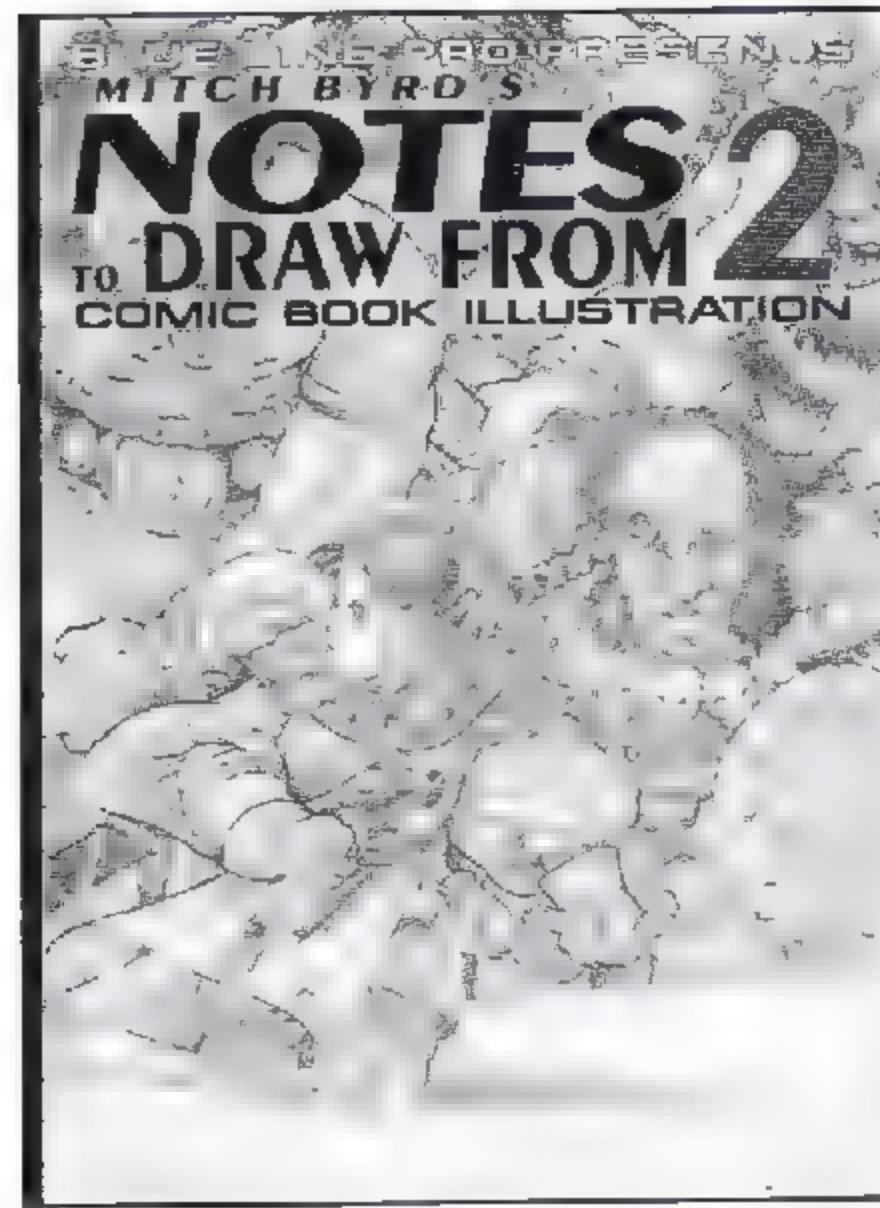
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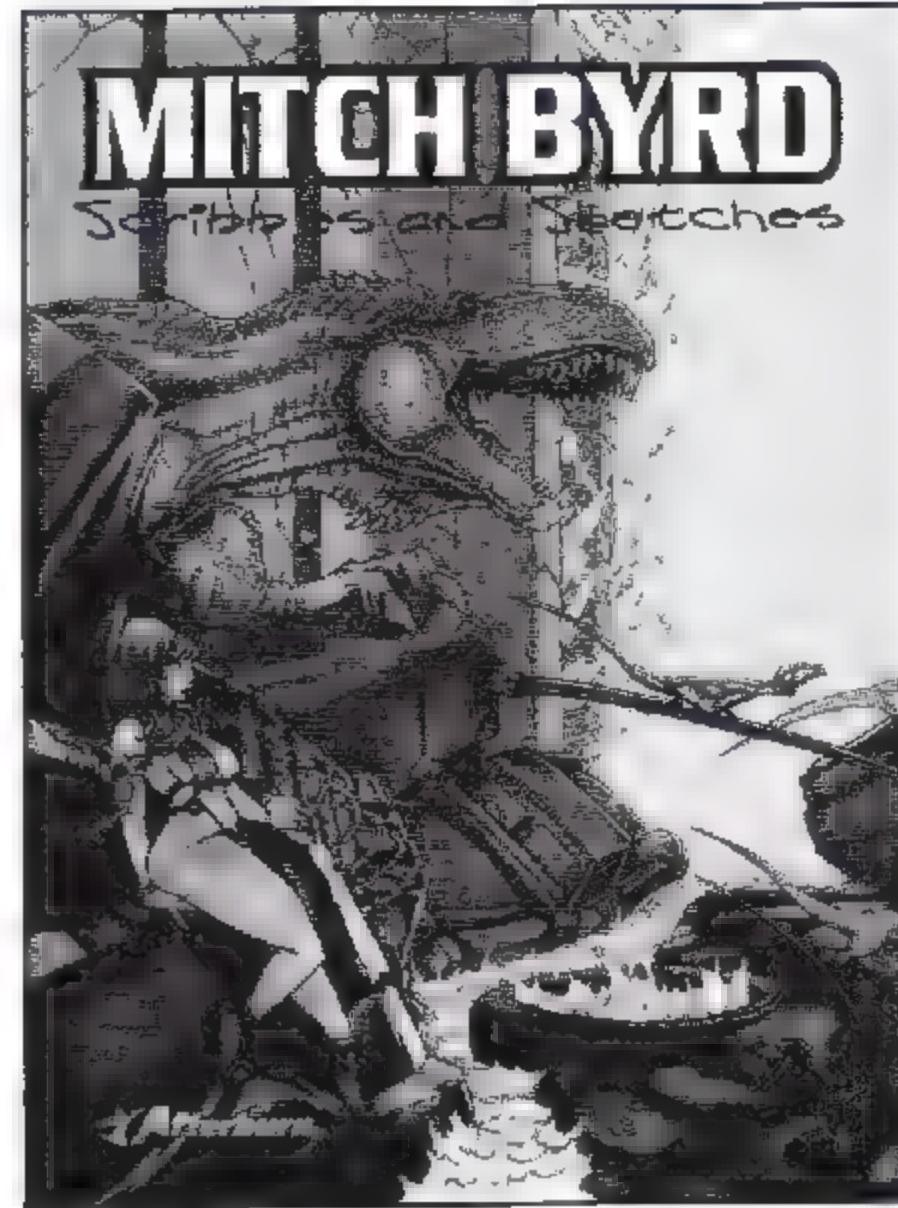
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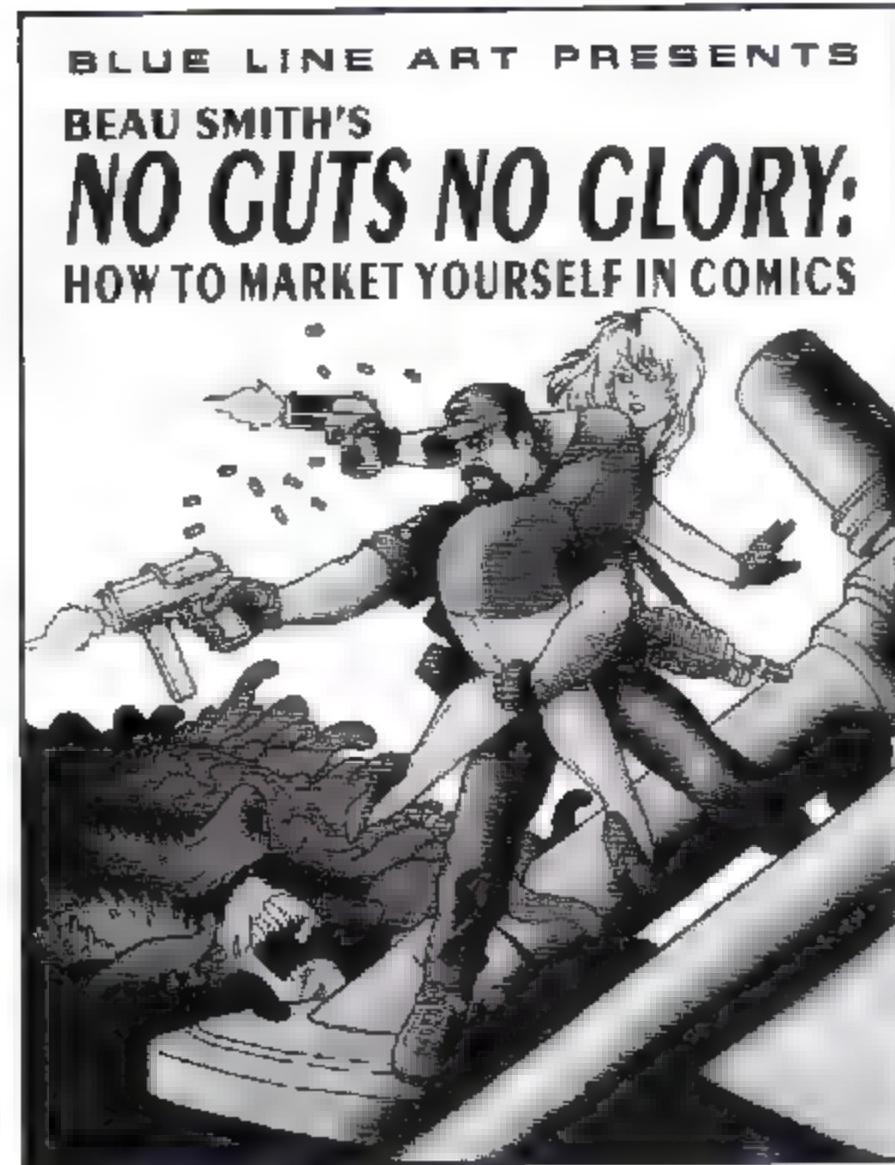
## NOTES TO DRAW FROM 2 COMIC BOOK ILLUSTRATION

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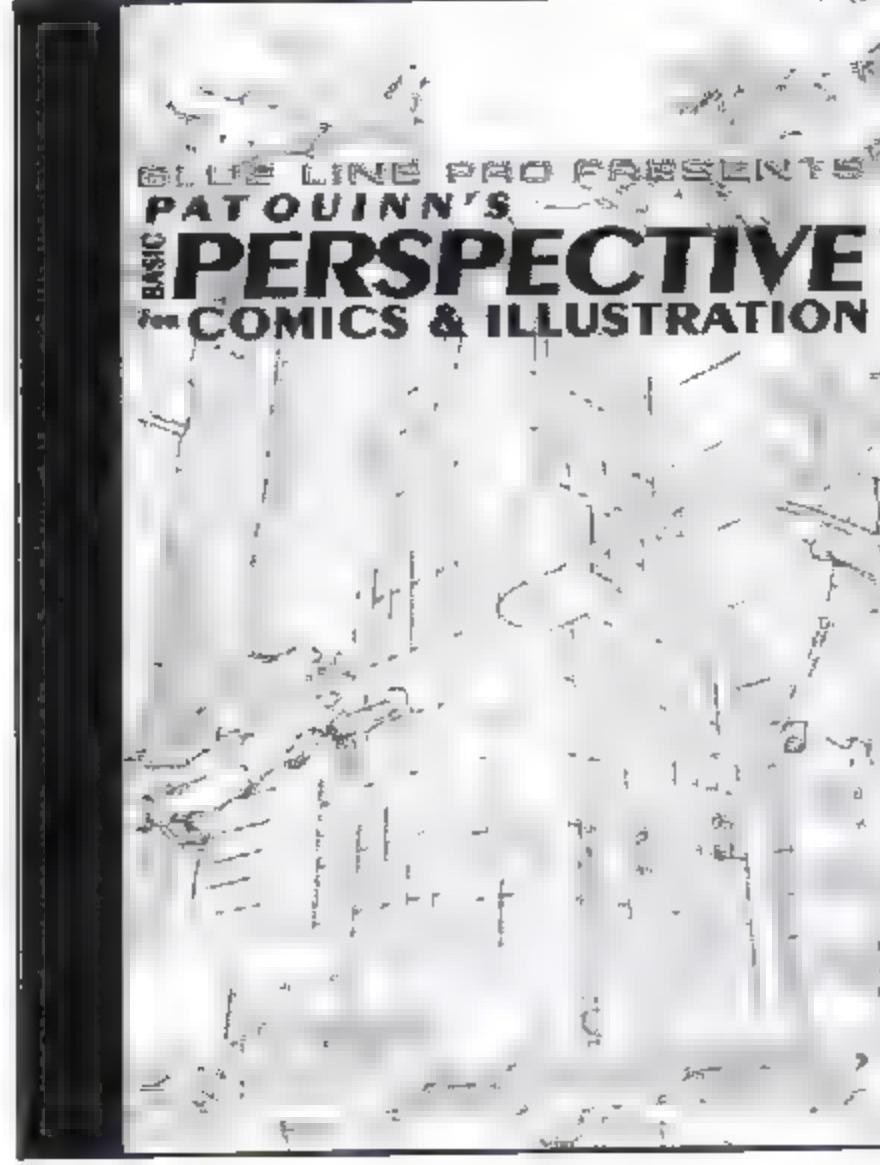


## MITCH BYRD SCRIBBLES AND SKETCHES

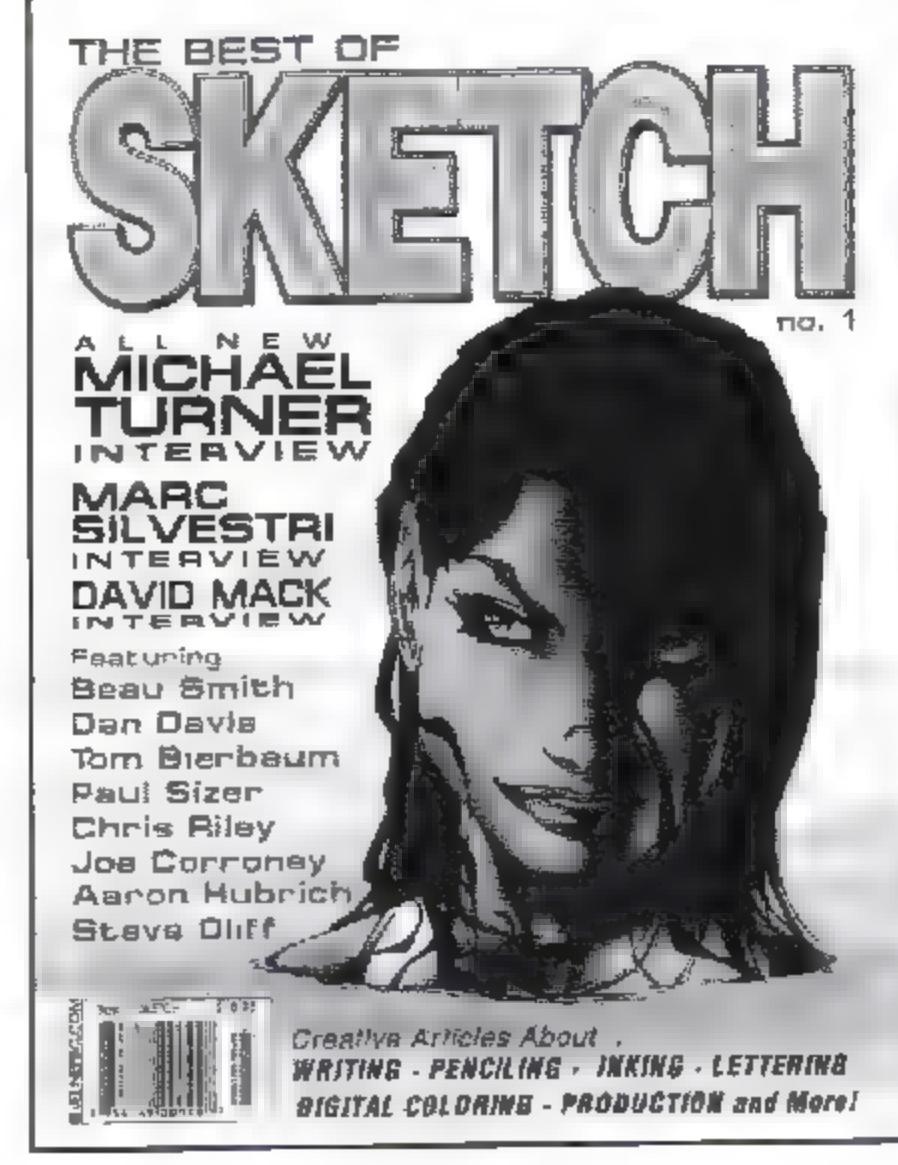
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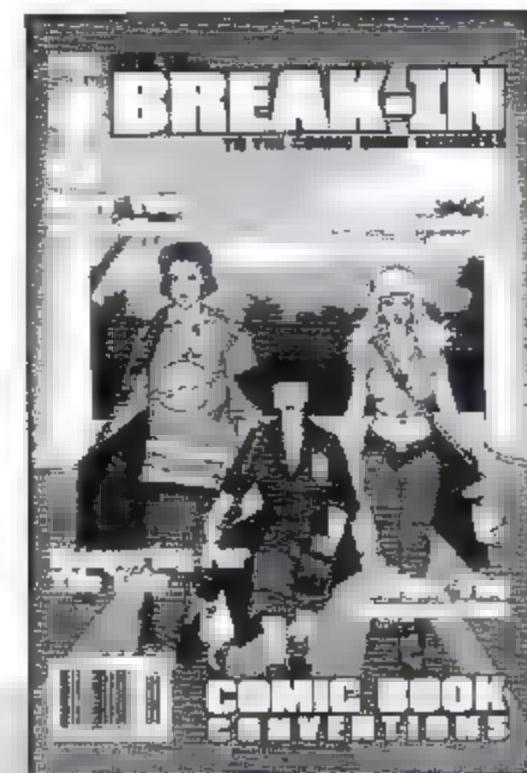
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# Blue Line Art

## Comic Book Art Board Formats



BOOK

Traditional Comic Book Art Board Border



BOOK

TRIM

COPY

COPY

Full Trim Comic Book Art Board Border



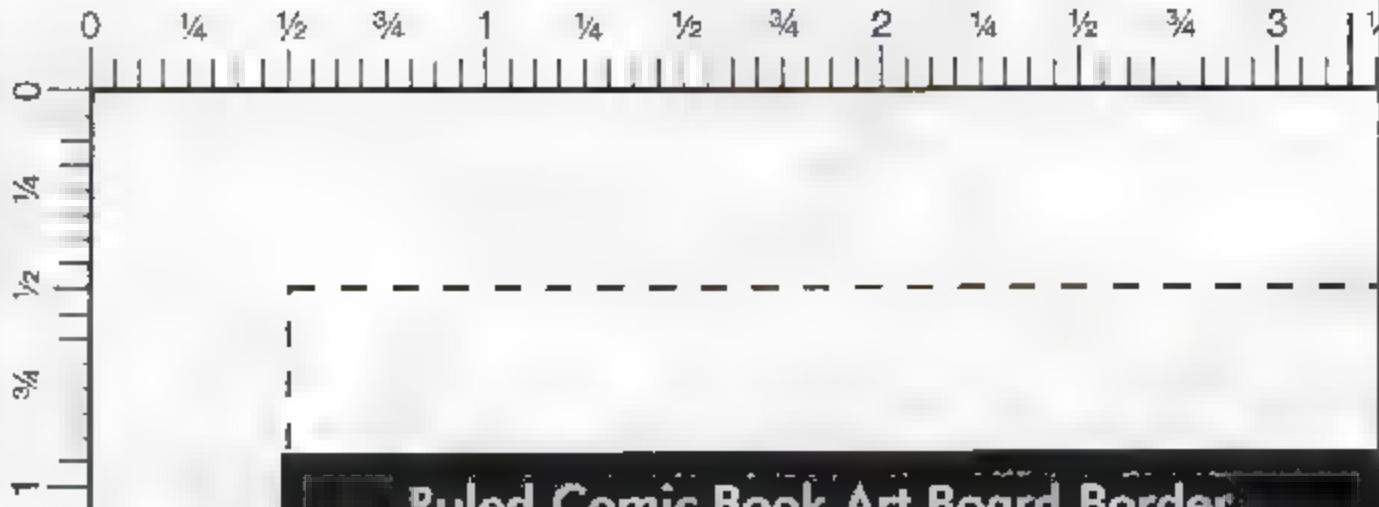
BOOK

1/4

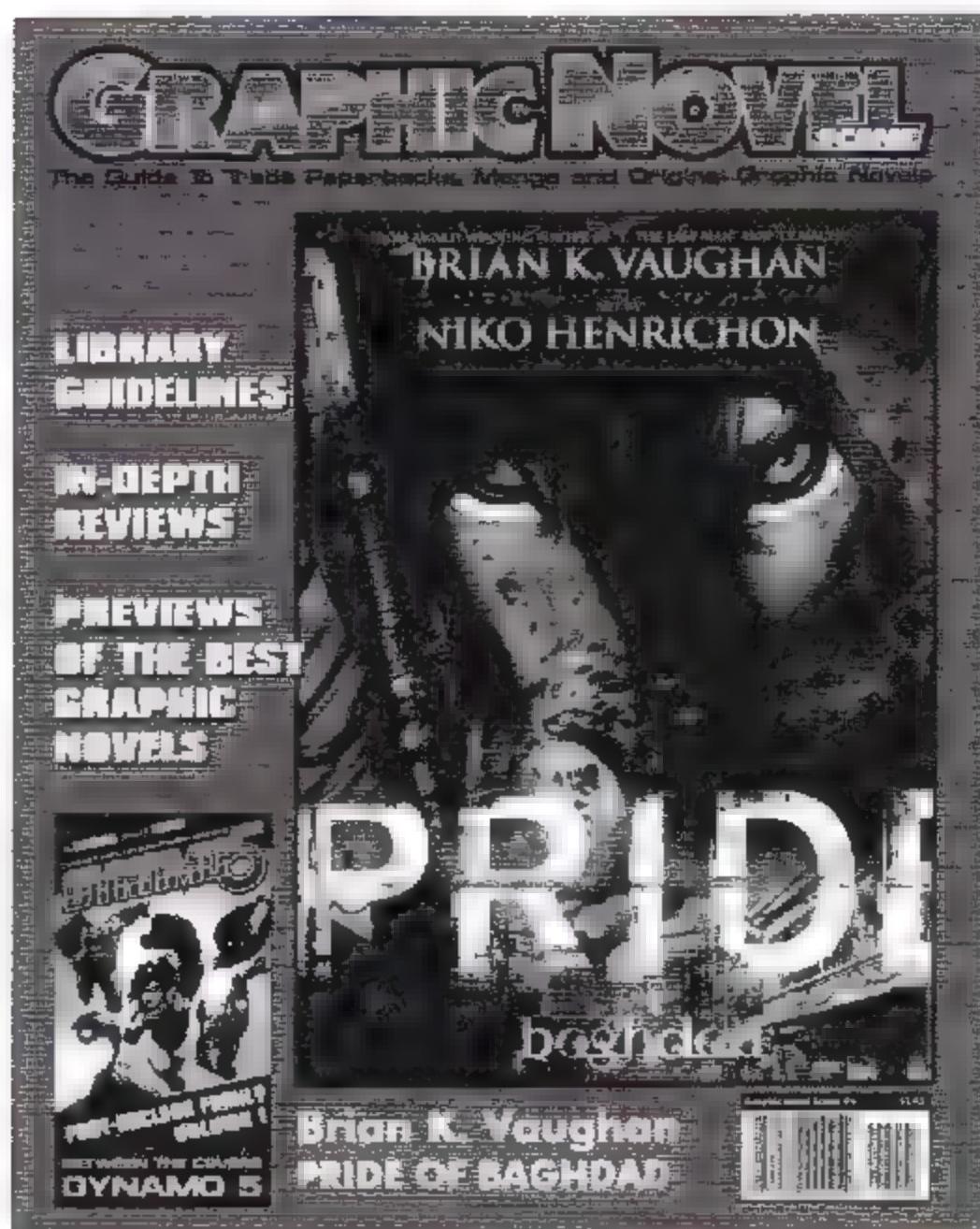
Illustration Comic Book Art Board Border



BOOK



Ruled Comic Book Art Board Border



## GRAPHIC NOVEL SCENE

The Guide to Trade Paperbacks, Manga and Original Graphic Novels Graphic novels are the fastest growing segment of the industry and GRAPHIC NOVEL SCENE provides the info that comics readers want to know! What's in print? What's it about? Find information valuable to libraries and essential to comic book stores. Including news, reviews, and more. This is the reference that will help readers find the gems they didn't know about!

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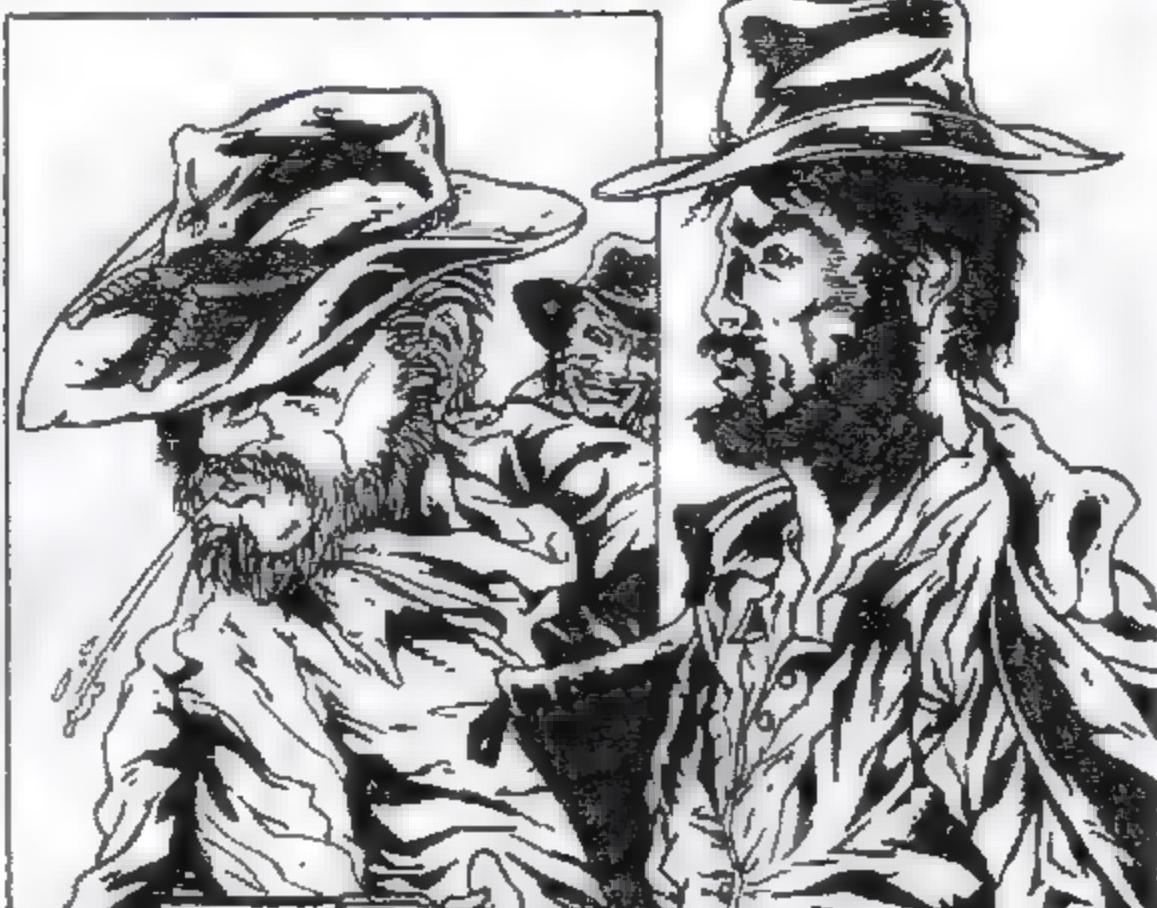
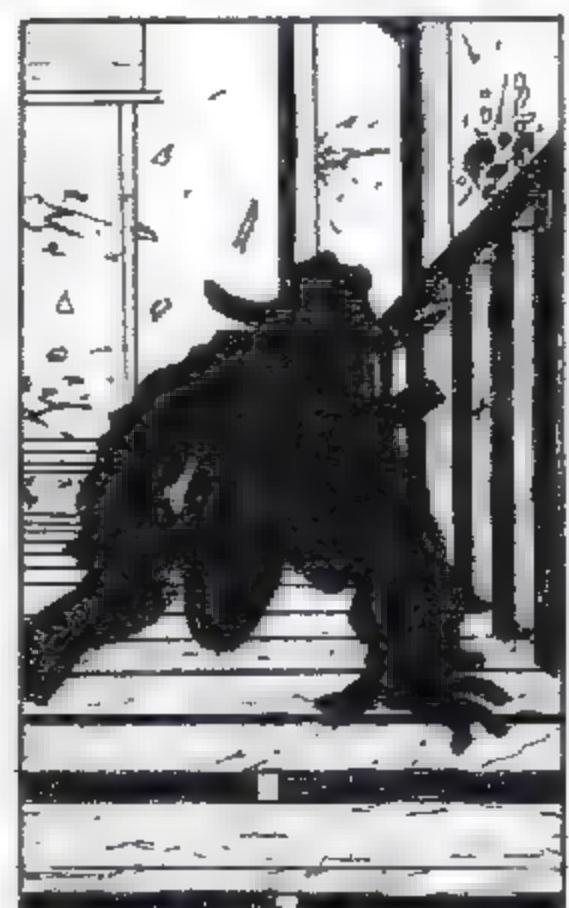
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# SketchMagazine.net

## Forum Art Contest

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### SKETCH MAGAZINE FORUMS: ART CONTEST WINNERS

[http://bloodandroses.com/cgi-bin/iB\\_cgi/ikonboard.cgi](http://bloodandroses.com/cgi-bin/iB_cgi/ikonboard.cgi)

Contest: Pencil A Comic Page From The Script Titled:  
"A Town Called Calamity"

**Steve Lydic**

Age: 33/ comicbook penciler for 3 years.

See more of Steve's artwork on the SketchMagazine.net Discussion Boards!

Stop by the Sketch Forums to participate in the next art contest.

**ERASERS**

**EVERYONE  
MAKES A  
MISTAKE**



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## Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones “Barbara Kesel and Caleb Prochnow”

by Bill Nichols

Courtesy of Gary Barker, I was alerted to the collaboration on a children's book between one of his former students and Barbara Kesel. I've been trying to espouse the opinion that comics are not a dead end, but can be a leaping-off point for a lot of other things, so I was all for showing this off. I've been reading Barbara's work for a long time and now I'm a fan of Caleb's as well. I think you will be, too.

**Sketch:** What can you tell me about the project?

**Barbara:** **Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones** is our dream project, an old-fashioned picture book with words that are fun to say out loud and illustrations that live up to the quality of our favorites.

**Sketch:** Okay, so give our readers some background on you (both). Not that they might need it.

**Barbara:** I've been writing and editing comic books since the Eighties. I've had editorial stints at DC, Dark Horse, and staff time at CrossGen. In between then and now, I've done freelance writing and editing. I started out in theater, getting my BA in Drama from Cal Poly, where I did writing, directing, and costume design. When the opportunity to go work for DC Comics came up (after I didn't get kidnapped—long story), I was originally thinking that I'd end up doing something in theater on the side. I ended up spending my spare time writing comics instead.

**Caleb:** I was educated at the Joe Kubert School in Dover, NJ and received my BFA from the Ringling College of Art and Design. After graduation, I started doing design and illustration work for Disney, Universal Studios, Nascar, Ron Jon Surf

Shop and many other large corporations. I'm a fulltime freelance artist, and love what I do.

**Sketch:** How did you manage to team up on this project?

**Barbara:** I have always loved the work of children's book illustrators from the turn of the last century, and I'd always wanted to work on a book of that type, but I don't have the kind of art skills to produce the quality of illustration I was after. At the Orlando Con in 2006, I saw the work of a phenomenal young artist with a portfolio that showed incredible range. So I asked him if he'd ever considered illustrating a picture book, and his face lit up.

**Caleb:** I remember Barbara coming up to my table in artist alley. She asked me if I would want to work on a children's book with her, and I became so excited that I forgot to get any of her contact information. After the convention, I was talking with my wife about the possibility of Barbara and I working together and realized that I didn't have any way to get a hold of her. I thought, "oh well, I guess that I blew that opportunity." But, about six months later, I was relieved to get an e-mail from Barbara asking if I was still

interested in the children's book project.

**Barbara:** Picture books are an entirely new field for both of us. We're diving into this project without having a publisher in place, but we've been getting such positive response from the people who have previewed the dummy copy that I'm certain Mr. Blanky will end up finding a good publishing home.

**Sketch:** So, what is your creative process for *Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones*? Being at different locations and having to trade things back and forth can be daunting, but exciting, I'm sure.

**Barbara:** I found the art from Caleb's sketchbooks (you can see plenty on his website) very inspiring. I had this image of an old man pop into my head. At first he was "Mr. Blanky" (as in a kid's favorite accessory), but it fell flat as a meter. So, "Cranky" got added in there. And that led me to the bouncy, repeated sound meter of the verses. But it still hit a dead end. Then, I went back to Caleb's art, especially the piece on his home page, and "bones" added itself to the character's name. Now, I had "Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones" and I wrote the first three verses as fast as I could type.

But, I still didn't know if this was anything Caleb would want to work on. I sent him the first bits to get his reaction, and he replied with some sketches of Mr. Blanky, who hasn't changed too much since then. I had those sketches (and a table to work at) during MegaCon in early 2007. I outlined the majority of the verses there. What became the dramatic turn in the middle didn't come to me until a day spent wandering around the grounds at Bok Tower, where the wind made the leaves dance... and then we had a ghost story.

**Caleb:** My workday usually begins at 6:30 A.M. I read for about 15 minutes or so before diving into my artwork. Once I'm ready to get to work on *Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones*, I pace around my studio reading Barbara's writing out loud. I usually stand in front of my body-length mirror and act out whatever scene I'm about to start illustrating. My original thumbnail sketches are usually pretty rough. I doubt that anyone could make much sense of them. But after a solid idea forms in my head, I start to flesh out my sketches.

I spend a lot of time on my layouts. It takes me 20 to 40 hours to take my rough pencils to a finished illustration. I want to make sure that I have a good solid foundation before committing myself to an image.

(See page 38 for more How-Tos)

**Sketch:** Okay, it's Plug Time! What are some other projects you have going on right now?



**Barbara:** I'm working on *Rogue Angel: Teller of Tall Tales* (IDW), which is a new story based on the character from the Gold Eagle pulp series; I'm also doing the comics adaptation for the upcoming animated movie IGOR for IDW. The second volume of *Legends of the Dark Crystal* is in the works for Tokyopop, where I'm also doing translation rewrites and some adaptation work. I've got an original series gearing up as part of The Pack, and there's a little book manuscript waiting for the next publishing phase from Actionopolis—*The White Knight: Line of Avalon*. Ian Feller and I are working on tag-team writing a scary story. I'm story-editing NTL for Josh Goldfarb and Darian Barnes of Twilight East. I've taught some workshops at the Art Institute of Tampa, and it's looking like I might be teaching some classes there later this year.

**Caleb:** At present, I am on freelance retainer with a sizeable apparel design company. The assignments that they give me vary from week to week. I also take other freelance jobs as they come to me; everything from editorial illustrations to comic book pin-ups/ covers. The remainder of my time has been spent on "Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones."

**Sketch:** What are you planning for the future?

**Barbara:** More of the same, although I'm branching out more and more into other forms of writing

outside comics. I suspect I'll be creating some sort of project that combines my teaching and writing experiences. I can't wait for The Pack to move into active production because I'm editing a number of really good new series there. And, of course, I'm looking forward to doing another story for Caleb to illustrate.

**Caleb:** I am looking forward to working on more children's books. Eventually, I would like to teach part-time at an art college. I have a passion for concept design work as well. I had the opportunity to work with some of the incredible talent at EA Games on the *Superman Returns* video game, and it whetted my appetite for creating new worlds.

**Sketch:** Thanks. I hope the book is a great success for you!

**Sketch:** Tell us how you approach the drawing of an illustration, Caleb.

**Caleb:** My process work changes, depending on the style of the piece that I am working on. You can see on my website ([www.cmp-art.com](http://www.cmp-art.com)) that I have a wide variety of styles. For this particular illustration, I began by playing a word association game after reading the page's text. I would pick a word from the stanza and write down synonyms or any random word that popped into my head while reading it. For example, if the verse had the word "creek" in it, I might come up with a list like: stream, bridge, troll, billy goat, rain, umbrella, ocean, waves, etc. This game serves as a springboard for ideas. I have read somewhere that a good illustrator doesn't just illustrate what the author writes, but instead, they show what the story doesn't say. I want my illustrations to bring something new to Barbara's story; something that can be looked at again and again, and won't lose its impact or effectiveness over time.

# THE PROCESS...



## Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones Concept Drawings:

These are the first/original drawings that I did of Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones. Barbara gave me a lot of freedom when coming up with the look of Mr. Bones. I wanted to design an expressive face that would be capable of conveying a wide variety of emotions. I also wanted Mr. Bones to have the ability to both frighten and delight younger readers. His costume had to fit with the time period of the story, and yet have a unique look.



#### **Jumping the creek rough sketch:**

In the children's book, Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones crosses a creek. It was up to my imagination to portray how he would cross it. In my first thumbnails, I had Mr. Bones crossing a bridge with a troll underneath (similar to the "Three Billy Goats Gruff" story). That concept just didn't do it for me. After some thinking, and referencing some old Disney books, I came across some camera stills from the movie "Fantasia," where the hippos were dancing with the crocodiles. This sparked a new direction for this illustration and a new direction for the rest of the illustrations contained in the book. The crocodiles became a dragon, and Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones entered a forest teeming with mythical creatures that only his dog was aware of.



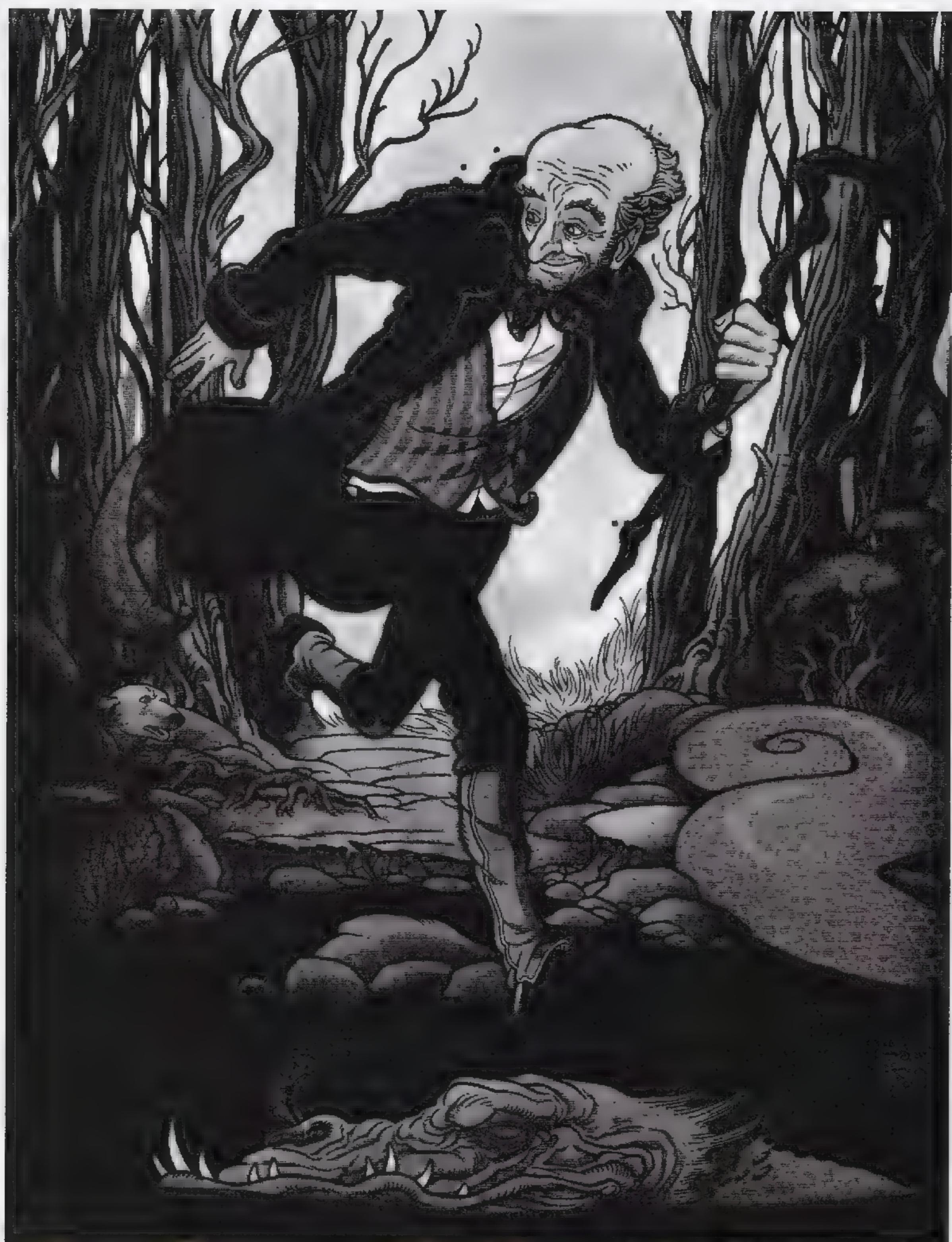
#### **Jumping the creek Inks:**

I ink my illustration work on 300 Series Smooth Strathmore Bristol Board. For Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones, I relied solely upon Micron Pens for the ink-work. I really enjoy mixed media, but I want a consistent look for these illustrations and limiting my tools helped me achieve that. I light box my rough illustration onto the Bristol board and I clean up the pencils. Since I am inking the work myself, I don't worry about line weight in the pencil stages.



#### **Jumping the creek Shadow Map:**

After I get done with the ink-work, I scan my illustration into Photoshop and print out a hard copy to plan my shadows on. I usually draw an arrow or arrows on my printout to indicate where the light source(s) are coming from. This is just some prep work for the colors, so that I won't be flying blind.



(To see this artwork in color go to [sketchmagazine.net](http://sketchmagazine.net))

**Jumping the creek Colors:**

I color Mr. Blanky Cranky Bones in Photoshop. I begin by blocking in the base colors. I used my shadow map to help me put all the shadows in place. The more layers in Photoshop, the merrier; I want my illustration work to be easily editable. After getting the base colors and shadows where I want them, I start adding textures and patterns. I usually know when I'm finished with an illustration when my wife is pleased with it.

## Deleter Collection

# Digital Scenery

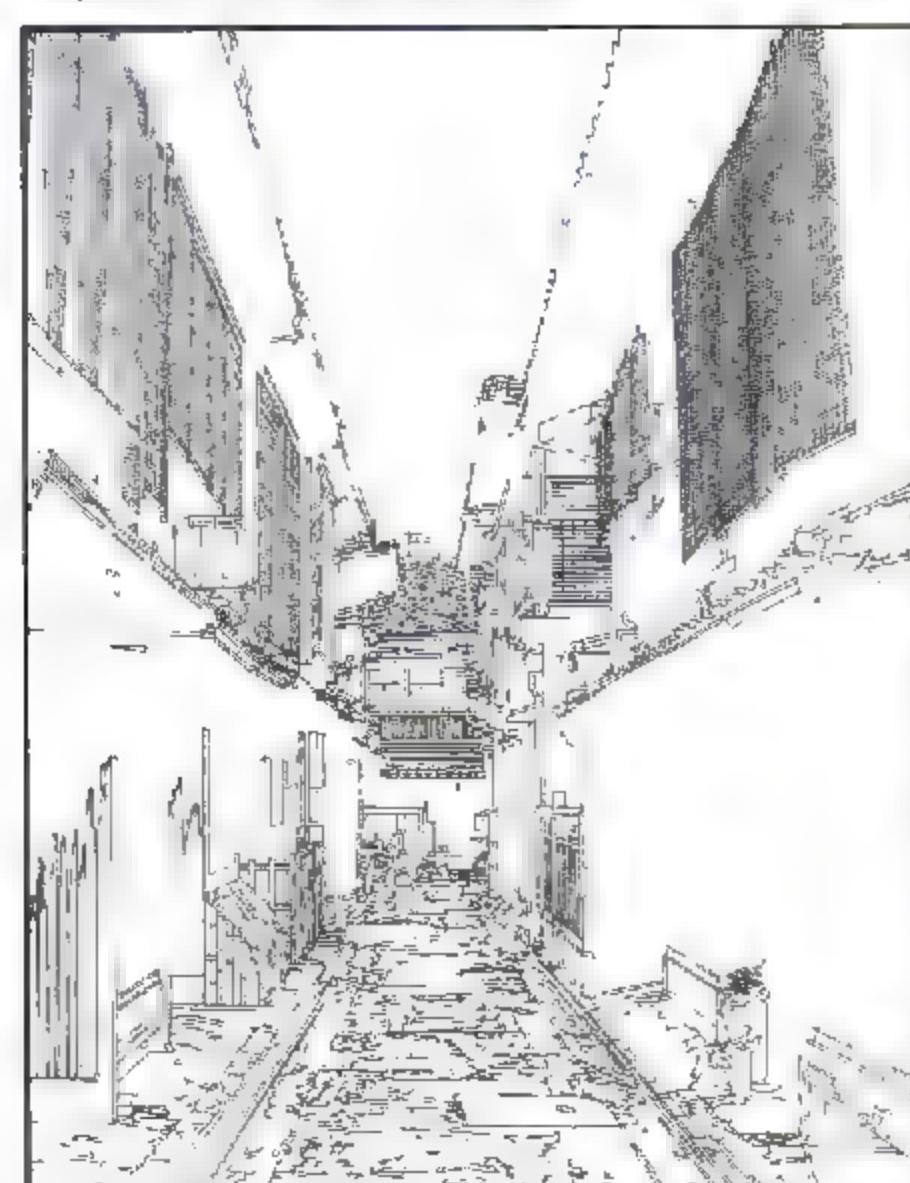
I didn't know what to expect when I put this CD into the computer. In the past I've been impressed with Deleter products in general. My only complaint is the help menu. ( See photo below). But what I found inside was a nice collection of backgrounds, buildings, etc.

The CD has several formats including 300 dpi, 600dpi, 600.jpg, and 1200 dpi. The images are mostly .PSD saved as Bitmap. Each format has two directories titled Beta and Line. The Line has between 25 and 30 scenes illustrated with no shadows, all line artwork. The Beta folder has between 25 and 30 scenes illustrated but the shadows have been added. This is great if you have a piece of artwork where the lighting doesn't matter. If you need to control the lighting you can use the Line files and shadow as you need. Most of these scenes represent Japanese scenery and architecture.

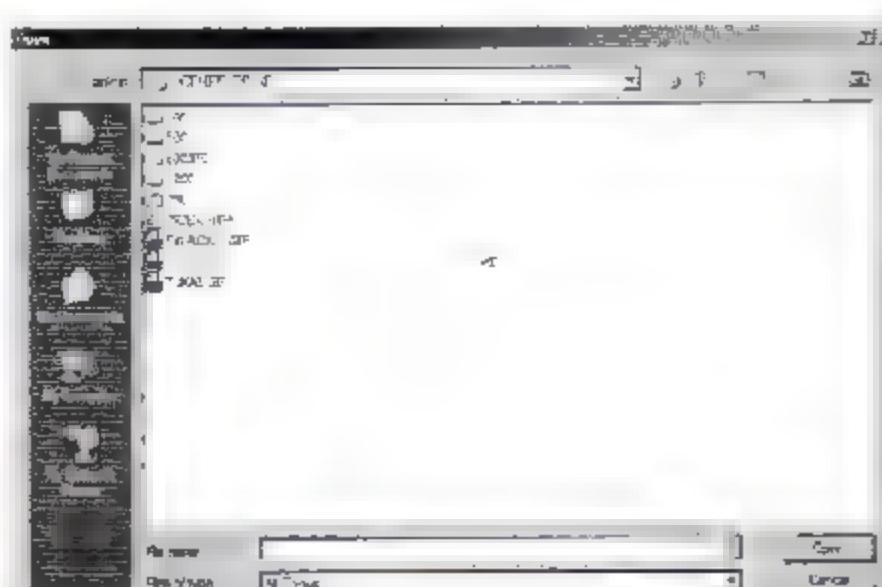
If you're doing manga or a samurai story these could work for you.



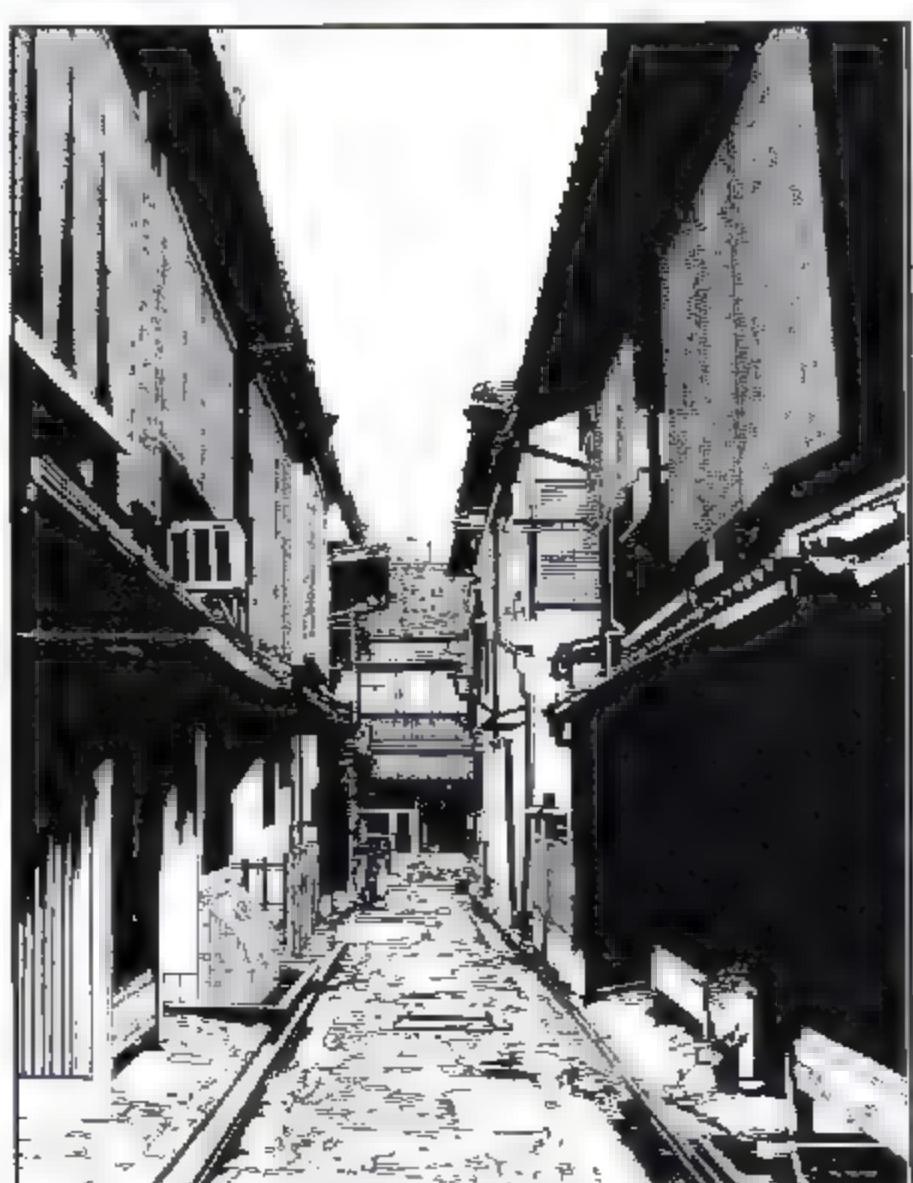
Help Screen. Can't read Japanese



Line sample



Folder breakdown from 300 dpi, 600dpi to 1200 dpi.



Beta sample

# LETTERING FONTS

**From Master of Comic Book Art TIME SALE, Comicroft brings you a set of characters Tim has been working on his whole life. Hard boiled art still with plenty of soft curves, you won't want to go into the big city alone at night without them.**

**UPPERCASE BALLOON LETTERING FONTS WITH ALTERNATE CHARACTERS**

**REGULAR AABBC123?!**  
**ITALIC AABBC123?!**  
**BOLDITALIC AABBC123?!**  
**OLDITALIC AABCC123?!**

**BRUSH LETTERING FONTS WITH ALTERNATE CHARACTERS**

**REGULAR AABBC123?!**  
**ITALIC AABBC123?!**

**THIS CD CONTAINS FILES FOR MAC AND WINDOWS. WORKS WITH ILLUSTRATOR, PHOTOSHOP, QUARK AND MOST GRAPHICS PROGRAMS.**

**CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING FONTS:**

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<b>GOREBUMPZ</b>	<b>SPIDER TOOTH</b>
<b>MELTDOWN</b>	<b>SCOOBYDOO</b>
<b>PLUS TRICKORTREAT DINGBATS</b>	<b>WORKS WITH ILLUSTRATOR, PHOTOSHOP, QUARK AND MOST GRAPHICS PROGRAMS</b>

**ZOMBS, OUR MOST POPULAR FONT**

**WILD AND CRAZY**

**ABCDEFHIJKLMNOP**  
**abcdefghijklmno**  
**1234567890?!**

**CLOBBERTIME INCLUDES CRUNCHY & SMOOTH FONTS**

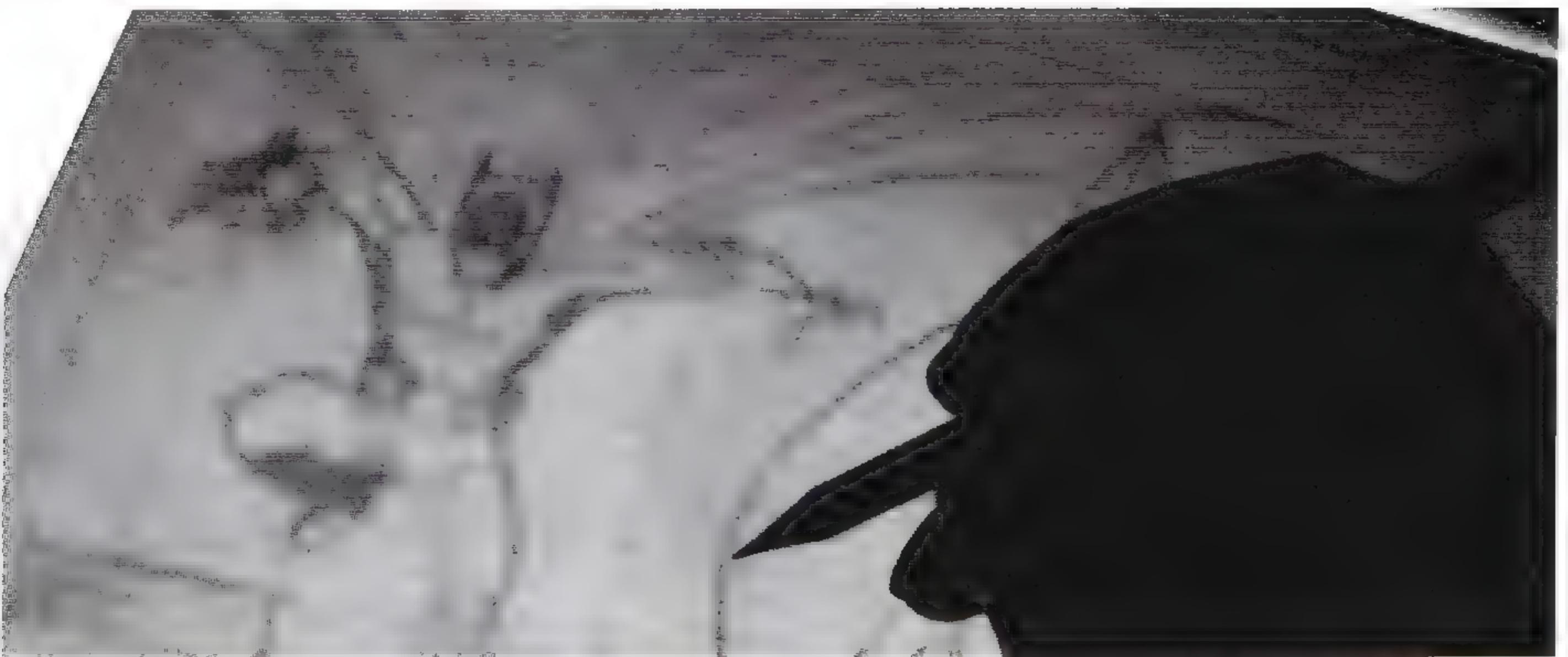
**ABCDEFHIJKLMNOP**  
**ABCDEFHIJKLMNOP**

**'NUFF SAID FONT FEATURES 52 CARTOON DINGBATS**

**THIS CD CONTAINS FILES FOR MAC AND WINDOWS. WORKS WITH ILLUSTRATOR, PHOTOSHOP, QUARK AND MOST GRAPHICS PROGRAMS.**

# Batman: Illustration by Example

by Neil Vokes



Like anyone else, I start with the idea. In this case I chose Batman because he's long been a favorite character of mine and he's always fun to draw.

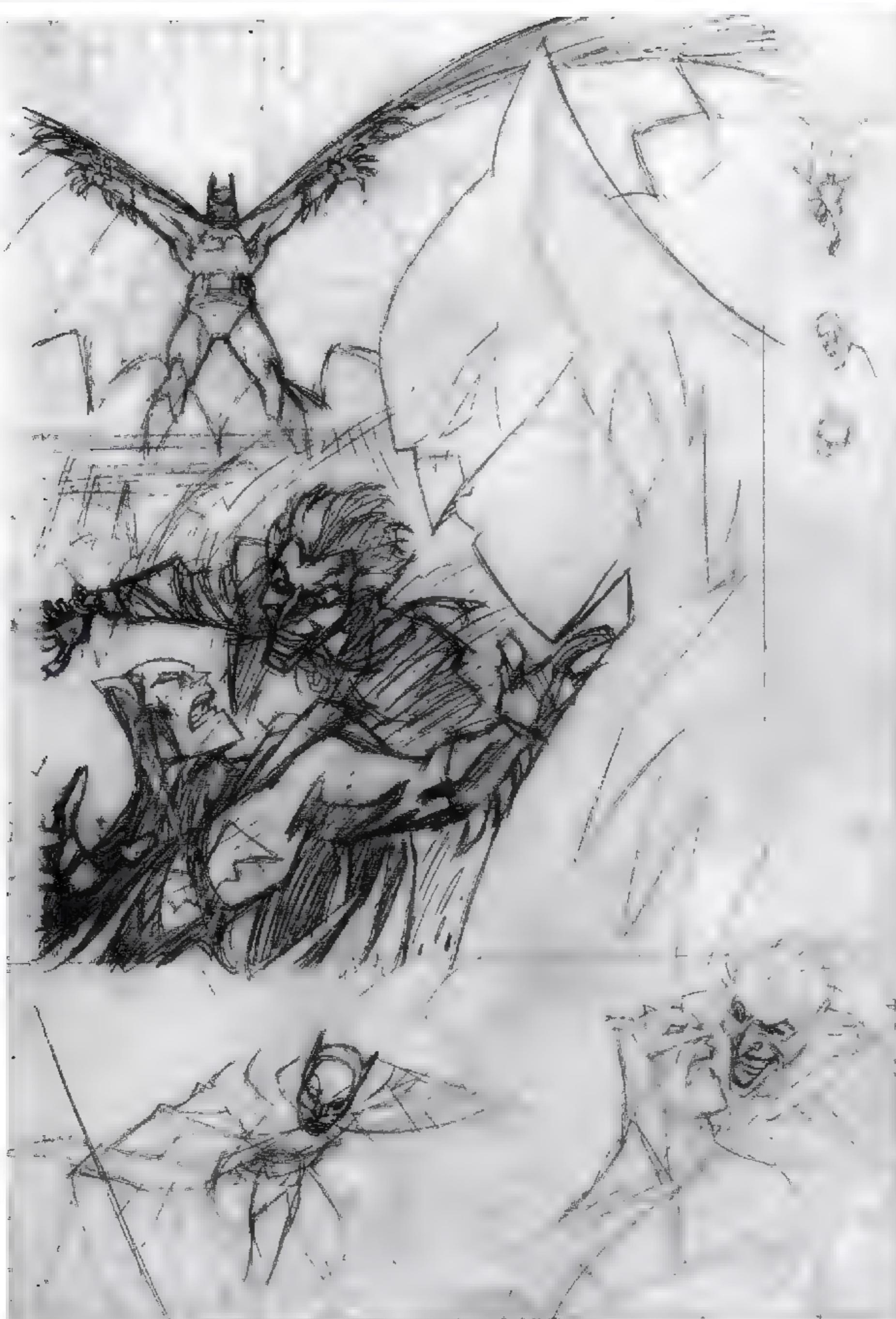


I begin with a quick sketch or "thumbnail", so-called because of its size, although it's actually more trading card-size the way I do it. I decided on a multiple figure shot; this gives me more of a chance to explore the character from different perspectives: in action, posed, dramatic close up, etc.



I then take this small sketch and scan it, putting it in the computer so I can enlarge it to 10" x 15". In the old days I would have taken it to the local print/mail shop and enlarged it on their copier, taken it home to do the next steps and then returned to the store, etc. (Computers = time saved :o)

I then print out a full-sized copy (10" x 15") and start to "clean up" the sketch by placing tracing paper over it. I sometimes do several stages of this, playing around with the figure positions and angles, adjusting whichever elements may need it. In this case I decided to switch the picture left to right, so now the large profile of Bats is on the right side of the piece. It just seemed to look "better". You can then see my switched, cleaner version on the lightboard as I put it onto the Bristol.



Now here's where things began to change. Although I liked the two smaller figures, I tried a few variations. The leaping Bats became a dramatically uplit shot on a building ledge, cape outstretched like wings. This then made the lower left high angle shot of him look "wrong", so I came up with a Joker/Batman confrontation instead. You can't go wrong with one of the greatest comic book villains ever. (A couple roughs of those ideas can be seen below the piece.)

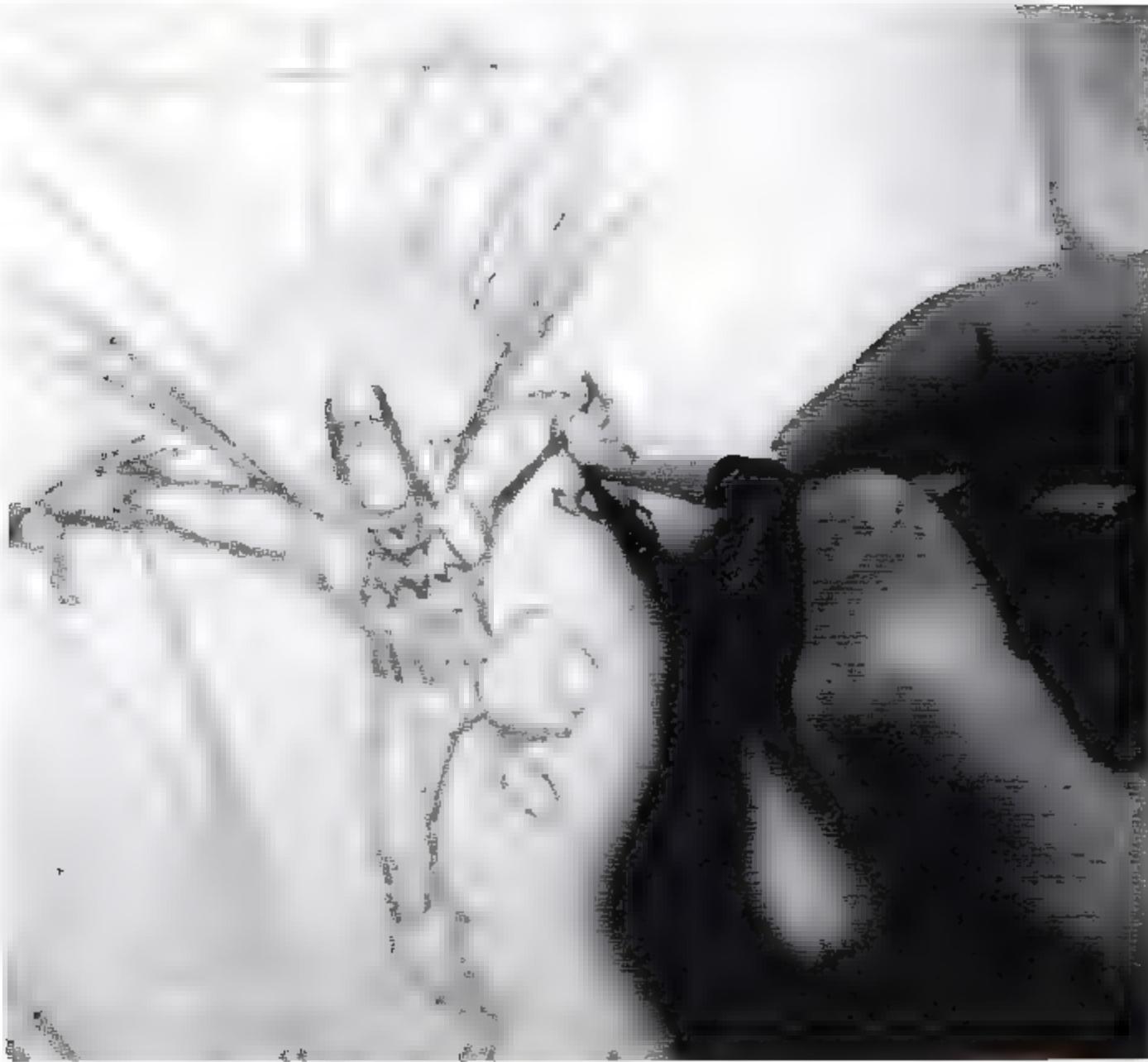


**YOU NEED  
TO START  
IN BLACK  
AND WHITE**

**INKS  
AND  
WHITE  
OUT**



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Well, I worked at cleaning these up for a time until I realized I preferred the leaping Bats to the posed one, so I put that back via the old reliable lightboard onto a new piece of Bristol. (Next to forest fires, comic artists are the biggest danger to our forests ;o) but kept the previous pose's uplit lighting.



I tried stylistically to reflect the changes to Bats through the years by combining the animated version with the more "realistic" one

In my opinion, there isn't any realistic art in comics; they're all stylized life, but I prefer the looser, more "cartoony" approach myself. It worked well enough for Will Eisner, so it's good enough for me ;o



Now that I've stopped changing everything, I went about finishing the pencils. This piece is going to be inked by someone else so I did tight pencils. If I were to ink it myself, I'd leave it somewhat looser.



Once I've finished the pencils I try to distance myself from it because the temptation is to go back in and do more or, God forbid, change something again. One of the greatest secrets you learn about doing our job is learning when the work is done. Deadlines usually help us with that, but that certainly isn't a hard and fast rule for some. All in all, I'm very happy with this piece and look forward to the inker's take on it.

***That's All, Vokes***

***Neil Vokes***

(See the completed illustration at [sketchmagazine.net](http://sketchmagazine.net))





## Inkblots

# “The Inkwell Awards”

by Bob Almond

Greetings Inkwellers, and welcome to something a little different: the first *Inkwell Awards*!

Anyone who's been following my column knows that I have been doing what I can to bring more information about, and attention to, that most misunderstood, (if not altogether most disrespected), craft, *comic book inking*. It has decades of history. Worthy artists mastered this skill and built solid reputations. They have achieved admiration and respect in the industry along the way, but their work usually falls below the radar.

While there are other respected awards events presently running in the industry for all the various aspects of comic book creativity, including inking, I have been disappointed for a while that the debatably top tier of these, **The Eisners**, decided some time ago to not list a specific inker category. Instead! They combine it with another as the 'penciler/inker' designation.

I wanted to introduce an award system targeted specifically for the inkers themselves so we can honor our own. (Incidentally, I was going to call it the Inkblot Awards after my column but **Serge LaPointe** of the Inkwell mailing list suggested the Inkwell Awards. After some resistance I realized that it sounded better. And the Inkblots sounded too similar to the Inkpot Awards at Comic-con International: San Diego.)

This event is open for voting among the public and the industry itself, from the creators to the editors to the retailers and readers. I'd like it to be as simple and accessible as possible.

So, as of now an online voting option is posted at <http://www.inkwellawards.com> and you should be seeing the awards announcement with links posted at various venues. The voting site will also post a definition of what the (mysterious) inker does and even a reference list of creator nominees to assist in considering as many eligible inkers as possible.

The rule of thumb for inker status eligibility will be that they have inked more work in their career than penciled. Please feel free to vote for every category or only those you feel informed enough about (some are more 'shop-centric' for the creators). Categories not specifying a 'retro' or 'modern-age' designation are open to any eligible inker. Voting is effective April 1st, 2008 in conjunction with this very column and it will run until May 30th. Votes will subsequently be tabulated by myself and a committee of seven consisting of: myself, **Tim Townsend**, **Daniel Best**, **Mike Marts**, **Steve McNiven**, **Jimmy Tournas**, and **Bill Nichols**. Any nominees or votes may be disqualified if eligibility is in doubt. Committee inker members may not vote for themselves or each other but may be voted for on the ballot.

Results will be posted online at The Inkwell Awards.com site, my own site, an upcoming 'Inkblots' column and elsewhere. Subsequently, winners will receive inkwell trophies.

All advertising revenue at the site will be used to fund the awards and site expenses. Any surplus to this will be donated to **The Hero Initiative** (<http://www.actorcomicfund.org/>).

Let's see if we can successfully initiate an annual tradition from this! Special thanks to **Mark McKenna, Dan Panosian, John Beatty, Ernie Pelletier, Blue Line Pro**, the generous sponsors, and the input graciously offered from my fellow brothers of **The Inkwell** Yahoo mailing List: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/the-inkwell/>

Thanks for voting and good luck to all!

**Favorite Inker:**

- A) Retro (golden, silver & bronze age artists)
- B) Modern (@'90s to present)

**Favorite Finisher/Embellisher (known for doing finished inkwork over the layouts or breakdowns of a pencil artist):**

- A) Retro
- B) Modern

**Most-Adaptable Inker (showing exceptional ink style versatility):**

**Most Prolific Inker (not always recognized for innovative achievement but has a reliable track record, and doesn't 'phone it in'):**

**MVP Award (the go-to, troubleshooter ink artist that can save/boost almost any job)**

**Props Award (inker deserving of more attention from any age; mainstream or small press/indie):**

**The Call of Duty award (special consideration for an inker for donating their time & effort to the public and/or the comic community)**

**The Joe Sinnott award (a hall of fame designation for a career of outstanding accomplishment- choose one)**

Dick Giordano  
Tom Palmer  
Joe Sinnott  
Al Williamson  
Wally Wood

 Sketch

# SketchCard Gallery Show



BLUE LINE PRODUCTIONS / COMICS 2 GAMES  
SKETCH CARD SHOW TO BENEFIT THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

200 ARTISTS, OVER 1200 CARDS!

We raised close to  
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To every Artist who took the time  
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# THANK YOU

Robert W. Hickey

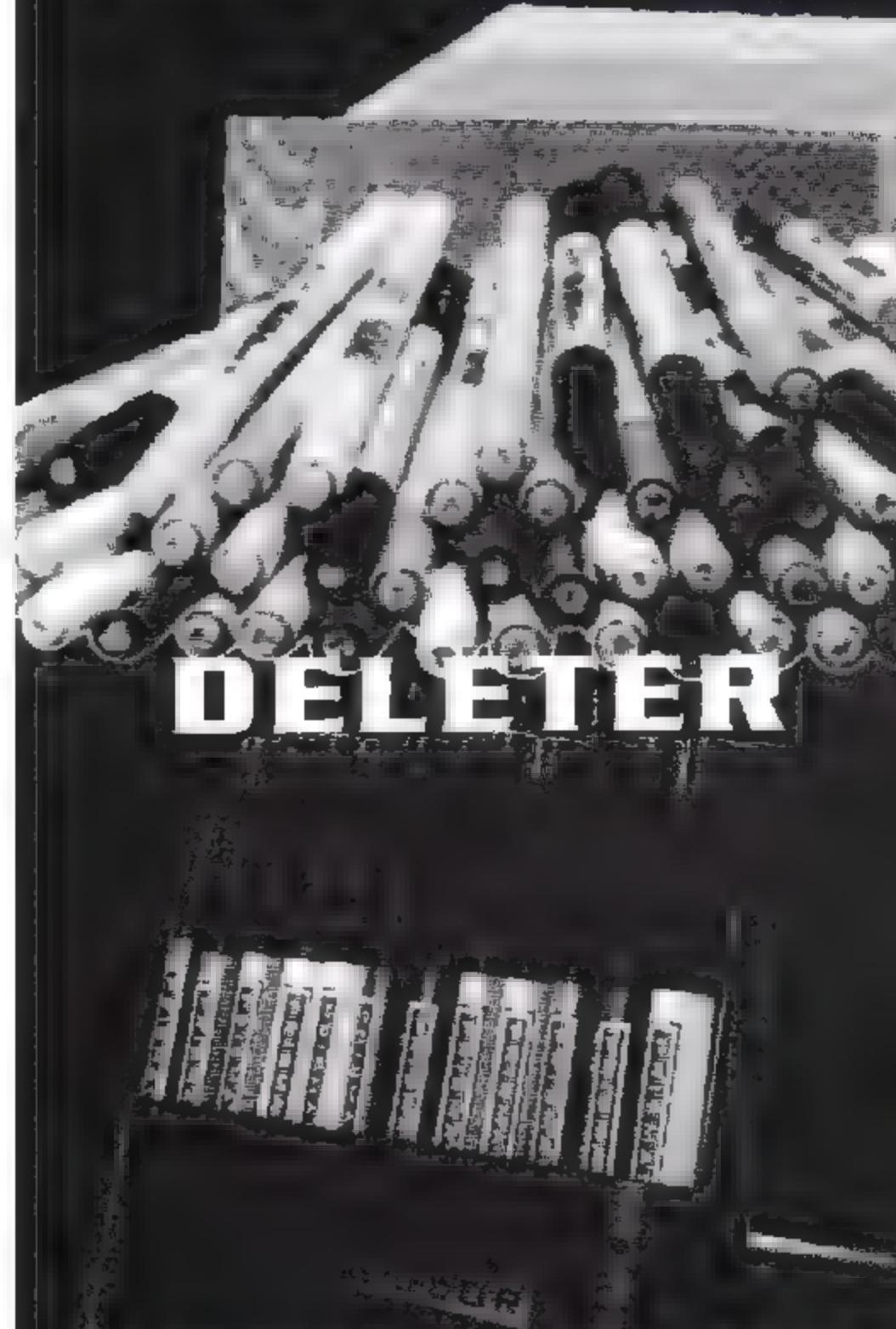
We're doing this again next year and several artists have already started

sending in cards.

Go to [WWW.COMICS2CARS.COM](http://WWW.COMICS2CARS.COM) or [SKETCHMAGAZINE.NET](http://SKETCHMAGAZINE.NET) for more  
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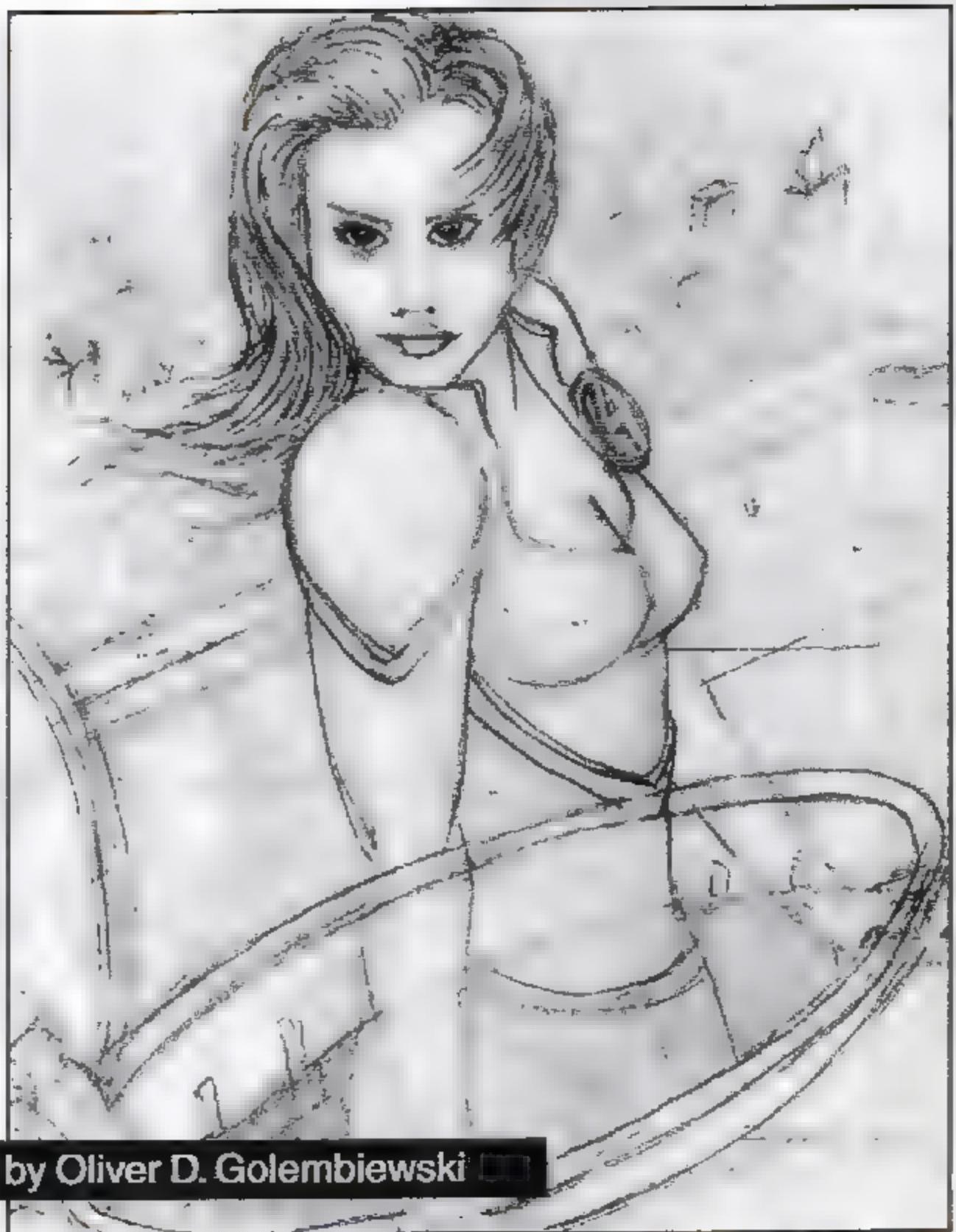
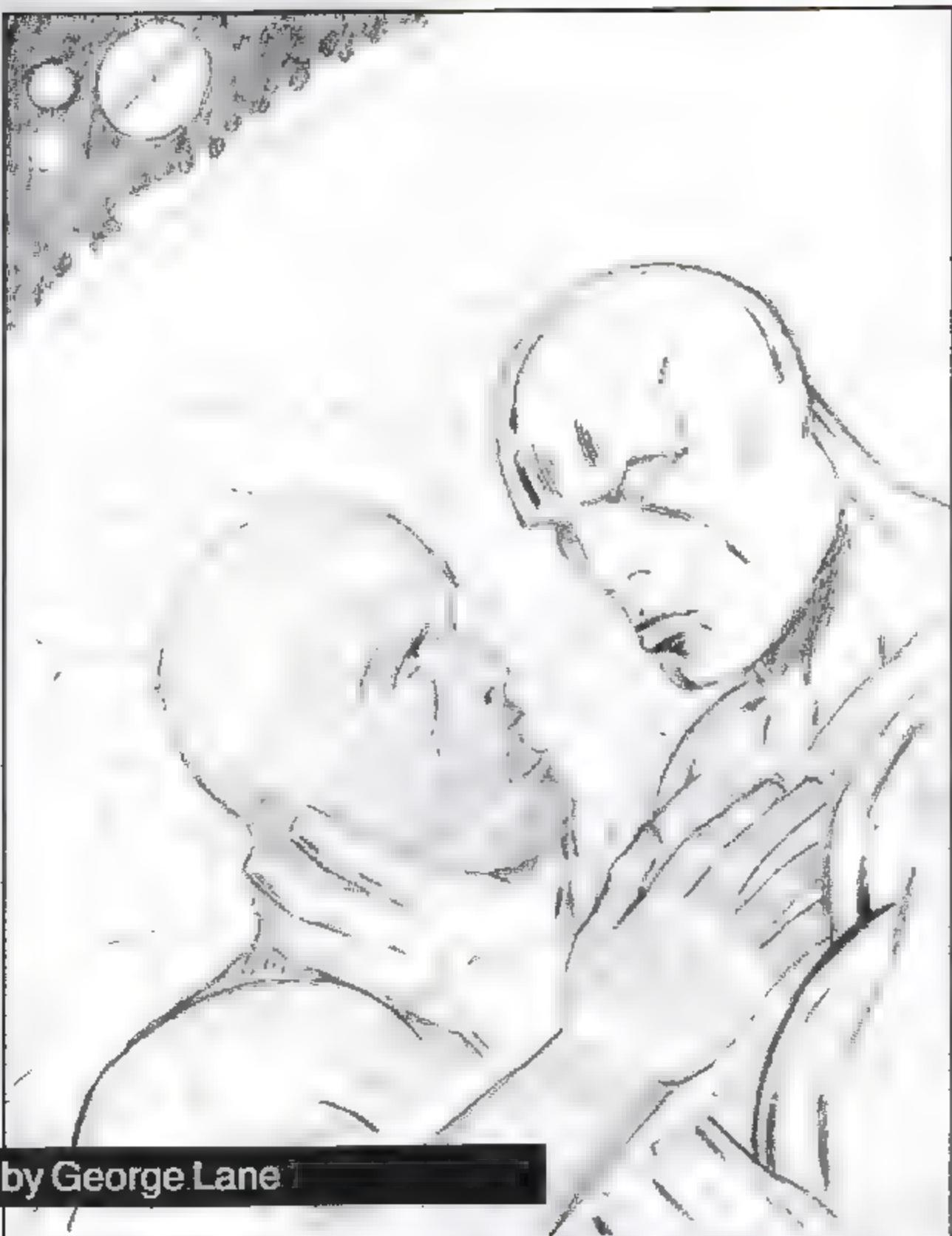
**TOMBOW**

**COPIC**

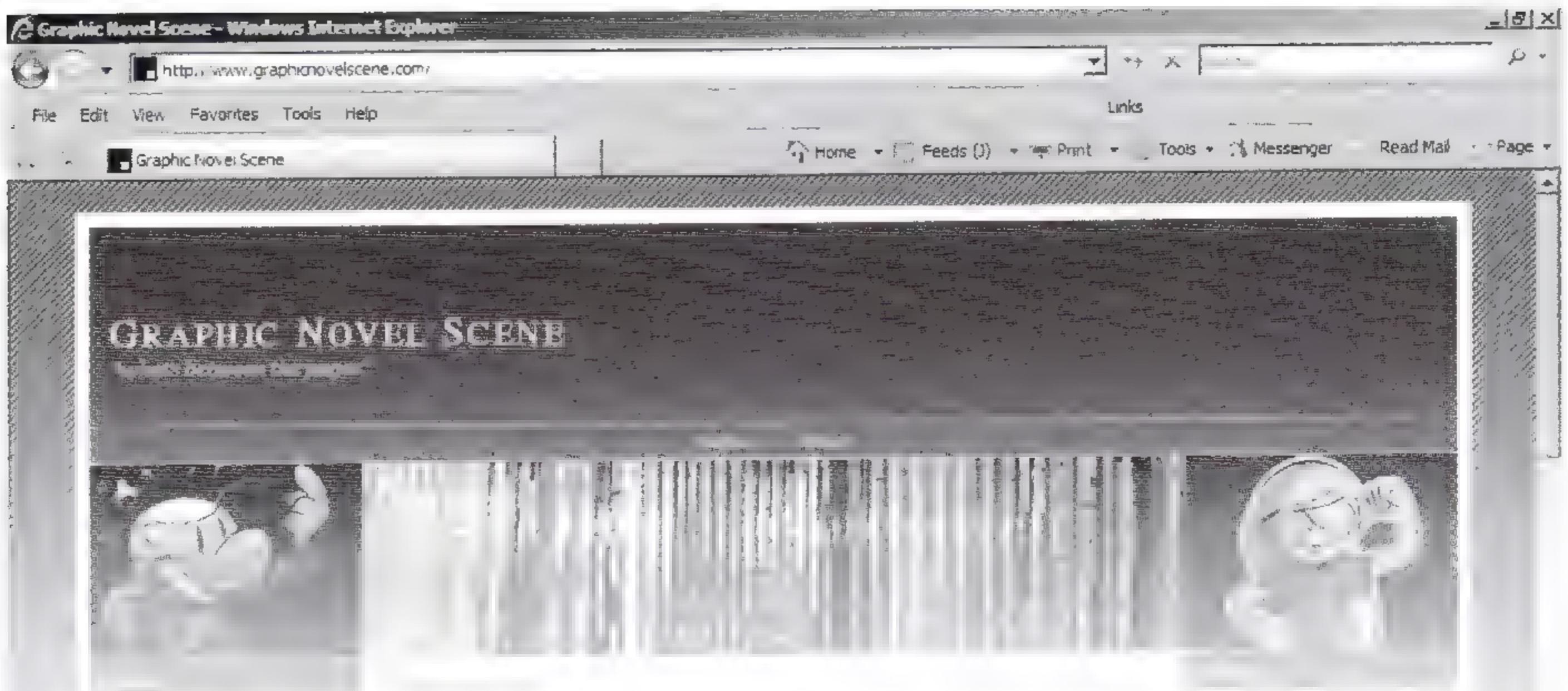
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# FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER

## ART CONTEST WINNERS



Each winner receives a copy of FANTASTIC FOUR: RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER DVD 2 disc set.



## Digital Publishing “WORDPRESS”

by Robert W Hickey

With the cost of printing and the difficulty of distributing, publishing digitally has become a way to take your ideas and create a greater readership and fanbase. Many people believe that you have to know how to design websites and stuff to publish on the Internet. That isn't true. It does help, but you can publish on the Internet and have very little knowledge of html, css or php.

I was recently shown software that will let you publish your comics and attach a blog to that comic. Why is a blog so important? Well, I've recently publishing *Blood and Roses* on the web ([www.bloodandroses.com](http://www.bloodandroses.com)), two pages of the *Majestic* work and one page of all-new art and story each week.

With some promotions I was able to get up to a few hundred readers a week, but I never seemed to have a connection with these readers. So I went back and did some more research and found that comics that have a daily blog attached seem, to build a readership faster and larger than comics that don't have a blog. I believe that readers and fans want some kind of connection with the creators.

With that in mind I went looking for some software that could publish comics **and** include a blog and would be easy to use. The key part is **easy**. I found **WordPress** and **ComicPress**.

WordPress is a blog-publishing software that is easy to use and install. It offers the ability to modify its look using templates. I've set up several sites so far and I have to say that they are the easiest sites that I've ever created.

To start you'll need to download the software to your computer and unzip/extract the file. Go to <http://WordPress.org/> and click on the *download* button (bright red button) located on the upper right-hand corner. Click on the download for WordPress 2.5. I suggest creating a folder titled WordPress to download the file into.

Now that you have the .zip file, extract/unzip the file. It should create a folder titled "WordPress" with several directories and files inside. You will see a file titled *readme.html*. This file opens a web page to the step-by-step instructions for setting up the WordPress page.

Before you go any further you have to create a mySQL database. This is very easy and if you have access to your domain to create one, then do so. As you create your database, write down the following: database name, user name, password and local host. You may have to create three of the four items that you need, but always write them down because you may need them another time.

If you don't know how to create a database, you can purchase a domain and have a provider host your site. Ask them to create a database for you. Tell them the name of the database, a username and a password. Make sure to have them email or fax you a copy of the items; you will have to have this information correct to move forward with WordPress.

*See side bar for setting up a database for mySQL.*

(Now if you want to have WordPress host your blog, contact them and they will set up your blog for you for a minimum fee. Because of the fact you publish a comic online you'll need to create an archive to hold all the comics that have been published. You'll have to pay for storage. So in the long term, I suggest getting your own domain. However, if you're only creating a blog with no comic, then having WordPress host your site is fine.)

Okay, the next thing you'll have to do is modify a small file that is in your WordPress directory that you unzipped/extracted. It's titled wp-config-sample.php.

You'll see several lines of code but the only lines you'll need to change are the following. And the good thing is you have all the information already from when you created your database.

```
define('DB_NAME', 'putyourdbnamehere');  
// The name of the database  
  
define('DB_USER', 'usernamehere'); //  
Your MySQL username
```

```
define('DB_PASSWORD',  
'yourpasswordhere'); // ...and password
```

```
define('DB_HOST', 'localhost'); // 99%  
chance you won't need to change this  
value
```

```
define('DB_NAME', 'putyourdbnamehere');  
// The name of the database  
As it states this is where you replace  
putyourdbnamehere with the name of your database.  
Be sure to leave the '' around your name. They are a  
part of the program language.
```

```
define('DB_USER', 'usernamehere'); //  
Your MySQL username
```

Now replace usernamehere with your username that you created when you made your database.

```
define('DB_PASSWORD',  
'yourpasswordhere'); // ...and password  
Replace yourpasswordhere with the password you  
created.
```

```
define('DB_HOST', 'localhost'); // 99%  
chance you won't need to change this  
value
```

I have had to change this every time but it's easy to find. On my control panel it's called Host Name. I copy it from the control panel and paste it in so I know it's correct.

Now save the file as wp-config.php.

**Tip: Your word processor may add a .txt or .doc after the file name. Make sure you remove it before transferring the file.**

The next step is to upload your files to your domain. Most control panels offer this through some kind of .ftp manager. I like to use an .ftp software called ws\_ftp95 that you can find on the Internet. You can find a variety of .ftp softwares or just use what your control panel offers.

Move the entire directory of WordPress over to your domain. If you want your WordPress frontpage to be the page that people see when they type in your domain name, then move the file in the basic structure of the domain. Or you can create a folder on your domain to move all the files into.

**Tip: You'll have to remove any index.html pages that are on your domain if you want the front page of Worpress to be your index page.**

I will usually move one directory at a time so the .ftp software doesn't crash. I've only had this happen once (when I tried to move everything at once) so now I move each directory and then the base files.

Once you've moved everything over to your domain, it's now time to do the final setup.

Open your browser and type the name of your domain and add /wp-admin/install.php to it.

It should run through a setup and give you a username and password. Write these down next to your database information; you'll need this to work on your blog.

Then it should pull up a login page.

Type in your password and have fun browsing around WordPress's dashboard. This is where you'll spend a lot of time writing and creating pages for your site. We'll go over each item in the dashboard in a future chapter but for now look at *Themes* where you change the look and feel of your site. WordPress offers hundreds of themes to download for free. But if you're publishing comics in your blog, you'll need to go to <http://mindfaucet.com/ComicPress/> and download ComicPress.

The ComicPress theme was created by **Tyler Martin**, a comic web publisher himself. Tyler designed ComicPress so that he could use WordPress to publish his comic. The great thing about Tyler is that he created a site to give ComicPress away to other publishers. There's also a forum so publishers can communicate with each other for help and tips.

We are working with Tyler on two new ComicPress formats that he'll be announcing soon.

Download the ComicPress zip files and unzip it. It will create a ComicPress directory. You'll need to open your ftp software and copy the entire "ComicPress" folder to the "/wp-content/themes" folder where WordPress is installed.

While you have your .ftp open, go ahead and create a directory called *comics* in the same directory that you have WordPress installed. This directory is where you'll place your comics when you upload them.

Now play around with writing blogs and posting comics. I found the easiest way to learn to use a program is to mess around with it. Just don't announce the address anywhere until you're ready for readers and fans to come to it.

Next time we'll discuss more about ComicPress and how to modify it into your own look.

Until then you can check out the following books and web sites.

**WORDPRESS FOR DUMMIES** (book)

**BLOGGING FOR DUMMIES** (book)

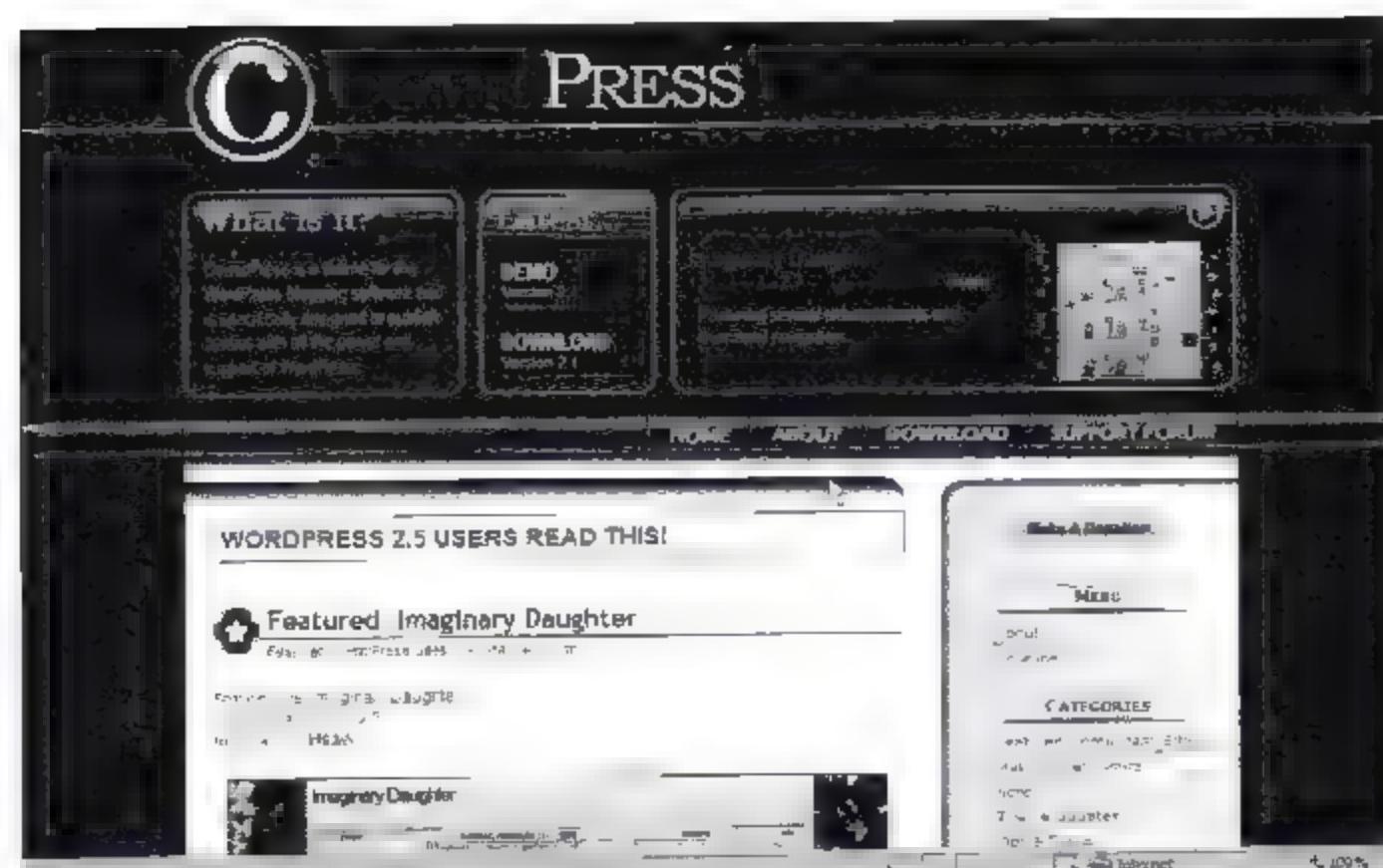
<http://WordPress.org/> (website to download the WordPress files)

<http://mindfaucet.com/ComicPress/> (website to download the ComicPress theme files)

<http://mindfaucet.com/ComicPress/doc-2-1.html> (website to modify your ComicPress theme)

Take care,

Robert W. Hickey



ComicPress. Check out the forums and helpful How-To articles.

Sketch

## Setting Up Your Database

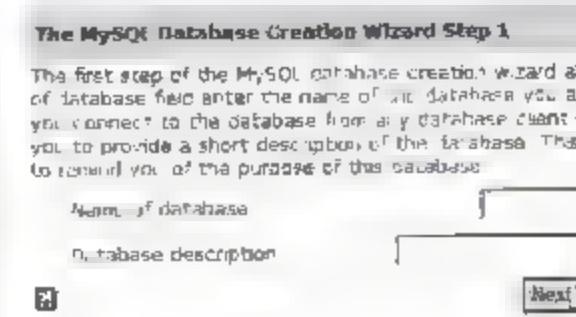
Open your control panel for your domain.



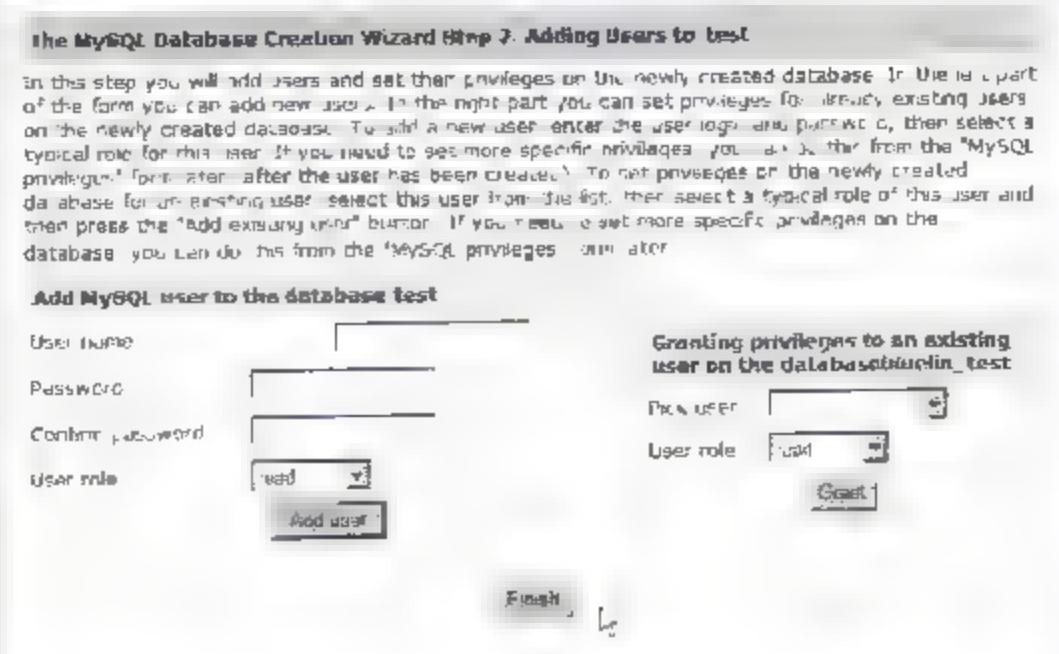
Click on MySQL Server Icon. I'm sure everybody's control panel is a little different.

Click on add database.

Here is where you name your database and write a description.



Next is where you set up the username, password and user role. The user role has three options: read, read/write and dba. Read means this user can see the database but not send anything to it. Read/Write means this user can see the database and can send files to the database. DBA (database administrator) means you can see, send and modify any file in the database. Select dba for your user role.



Click *finish* and that all. It's easy.

*All letters received will be considered for publication. Letters published will be done so as received in regards to spelling, punctuation etc. However letters may be edited for length, language and/or other considerations. All letters should be signed by the writer, as well as including the writer's legibly printed name, address and contact numbers (phone, fax, e-mails). Opinions expressed are those of their respective letter writers and not necessarily shared by Blue Line. While open as a critical forum, it is Blue Line's hope and intention that correspondence maintains constructive and positive elements of criticism. Simple name calling, rumor mongering and/or maliciousness is not of interest. Unless our editor does it.*

*Please send your e-mail missives to sketchletters@bluelinepro.com. With all letters, please state clearly, if you wish to have your address in print. We look forward to hearing from you.*

# Letters Forum

The new *Sketch Magazine* featuring me and other artists arrived yesterday and I wanted to thank you for the nice presentation.

I checked the article over and, though some gallery sketches caught some overall darkness (Printers love to go dark—I think they're all from the dark side) all else held up very well. Especially the Thor painting on the contents page.

Appreciate your hard work on this issue and I'm sure the other artists thought so as well.

Job well done, Bill.  
Steve Rude

Wow.

*That sort of says it all, doesn't it? I mean, what would you say if you read that? Understand that I have monstrous respect for Steve Rude and you'll start to get it. I love it when an issue comes together and I love it when I hear back, especially from the contributors or the person we interviewed.*

Thank you, Steve, for consenting to do the interview. Thank you for your kind words and thank you for continuing to produce such dazzling comics!

Bill

Greetings Sketch Magazine!

Oddly enough this is my first letter to any magazine (let alone comic related printed material), so please be gentle.

First and foremost - can we please get *Sketch* MONTHLY? Being an American in South Korea, I just cannot get enough of the magazine! I know you all work hard, and it shows! *Sketch* is a magazine that, as an artist, speaks TO ME, not DOWN TO ME! Thank you! The information that is shared within the pages is like gold and I cannot get enough of it! Sadly, on my quest for comic industry related knowledge, I must admit I have subscribed to a competing magazine. BIG MISTAKE! I will

not mention this DRAWing related magazine; and in all fairness, I have only received my first issue. Yet, within their pages, I did not glean any suitable knowledge that will help my creative work. On top of that, they only ship 4 issues a year!

While reading this other magazine, I felt the writing style - as I said before - talked DOWN to me. Meanwhile, *Sketch* is so well written, I feel like a peer. I feel the writing (*in Sketch*) is done in a way to treat me as a fellow artist, not an art student hack. Apologies in advance to art students.

On top of that, *Sketch* gives me insight to the world of creative minds from other facets of the industry such as Letters, Writers, Publishers, etc. Art is merely a fraction of the creativity equation needed to generate quality illustrated stories.

Secondly, in issue 34, concerning Steve Rude's interview, I was FLOORED when I read that Mr. Rude said, "...(he) Don't read 'em much anymore..." and "...for the most part, comics today have a very cold and superficial kind of feel to them..."! Again, this FLOORED me! In my years (geez, I sound old) I have learned that the main driving force behind creativity is the love for doing the work. Without the love, one will lack motivation. Am I incorrect?

I presume Mr. Rude does still love the iconic characters behind the storytelling and combined with the ability to bring smiles to younger comic readers - is his motivation to create. I, for one, also am a little jaded from some of the stories. I can understand that. What I would like to know is what keeps him from throwing in the proverbial towel? None the less, very insightful interview!

Thirdly, comics as a profitable electronic medium. This seems to be the elephant in the room nobody wants to seriously talk about. Primarily due to the ability and ease

of electronic theft. The pluses to this seems (to me) to be able to reach a wider audience more cheaply (book costs are NUTS!), save some trees, save on printing costs, and offer another avenue for readers to read their books via a home PC or (my personal favorite) mobile reading device (for example, I read a lot of books on my PSP). Do you foresee an answer for this dilemma in the near future? Especially for mobile reader users - as most encrypted media requires additional software to utilize.

Well, that is enough from me. It is time to return to the *Sketch* forums, the drawing table, or my Transformers addiction. Again, thanks again for the FANTASTIC work you guys do! I cannot put to words the help you have given me.

Jeffrey Witty  
Songtan, South Korea  
PS - How bout some promotion for the gang going to Wizard World Chicago Comic Con to sit at the Afterburn tables in Artist Alley this June?

Good letter, Jeff.  
*I've made it clear that I would love to see Sketch as a monthly dose of comics-creating fun, but with the introduction of our website (www.sketchmagazine.net), some of the things I've wanted to do in the print mag may just find a better home on the website.*

*Actually, we can add to that thing daily, along with our blogging (mine and/or Bob's). Some of the things we'll be trying will impact our comics line at SkyStorm Studios and vice versa. As we do things, we can document the process and pass that along, bringing our readers along for the ride and making them a part of the fun and the excitement of bringing these stories and characters to life.*

*I've also made it clear that I wish I had had a magazine like Sketch*

*when I was coming up. That line of thinking will hopefully translate into quality features and information from creators from the Big Guys to the indy press. And the readers of Sketch will benefit...and then someday, when those readers get their break, maybe they'll feel like passing along their knowledge, and so on and so on...*

*Other magazines are other magazines and I wish them all the best, especially when they add to the pool of comics knowledge and talent. Some of the folks I respect a lot are in that group and I don't want to call them competitors. Naïve of me maybe, but that's the way I roll, son...*

*Good stuff is everywhere. Celebrate it! Add to it! Make it count!*

*Keep creating that art, Jeff, and keep drawing those Transformers!*

*Looking forward to seeing all you guys at WizardWorld Chicago! Thanks for being a part of our forum community!*

Dear Sketchsters,

As I read Issue #34, I was struck with how the magazine is evolving. It was always a great source for entertainment and information about the hows and whys of comic creation, but it has, in the last several issues, begun to evolve into a truly educational magazine while retaining all the aspects that made it great before.

As an educator in the visual arts, I am equally as interested in the process as I am in the finished product. More than anything, I love finding out how to get "there". That intellectual curiosity was definitely fed but this issue as a whole and specifically by the "Art School Collaboration-Designing the Characters" section by Gary Barker and Bill Nichols. The give and take of their dialogue as well as Gary's always superb art made me feel as if I had been part of the process. I can't wait to see how this will play out. Bob Almond's inking tips make me wish I had known him ten years ago when I was trying to be a comic book inker. These "now why didn't I think of that?" tips should immediately improve the work of any person who dips a crow quill. And whenever I get the chance to teach cartooning in

my class, I find myself referencing Mitch Byrd's work so often. I should ask the man to write a text book. His character positions and movements are so fluid that they seem to cover both a retro and modern sensibility all at the same time. Now if I could just get him to draw more clothes on his voluptuous women... (A guy can get in trouble taking those to a high school \*laugh\*). And as I find myself looking toward creating my own stories and hopefully seeing them in print someday, the advice of Tom Bierbaum (one of the most underappreciated writers I know) is always an invaluable resource. On the publishing side, Jason Baroody and Scott Story both gave me things to think about on bringing my visions to the world.

For me these days, it is equally important that I learn something as well as be entertained by what I read. From this issue of SKETCH, I learned a lot.

John Wilson  
Louisville, KY  
[Thedragonwerx@yahoo.com](mailto:Thedragonwerx@yahoo.com)

John,

*Thanks so much for the good letter. It highlights all the things I enjoyed about last issue myself (esp. the blt about collaborating with Gary...I have to admit, I'm selfish that way!) And there's more to come: you can count on that! Gary already has some Ursula stuff that will run in #36. And right now, I'm trading messages with several of my fave creators and art buds to continuously add great stuff for issues to come!!*

Bill

Send all your letters and questions to:  
Sketch Magazine, 166 Mt. Zion Road,  
Florence, KY 41042  
or email  
[sketchletters@bluelinepro.com](mailto:sketchletters@bluelinepro.com)

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# **Breakdowns of a Sketchcard**

**by Uko Smith**

## **1. How to make a drawing exciting in such a small space?**

The thing that I think about foremost is the personality of the character. I do a bit of research on the character if I don't know that much about him/her. After I find out their abilities I scrounge around for a story. If I can't find one handy, I usually make one up on the spot.

I then start to think about the layout and what I can do to make the character and card as collectible as I can. For instance, I particularly liked the Catwoman and Batgirls that I did on motorcycles. I figure that since I love to illustrate vehicles, I might as well throw some down on





the cards. If I didn't put a bike in with the Batgirls, I would at least put a motorcycle helmet in there for good measure. Now the biggest challenge of this is how to make it interesting. So that's when knowing perspective and the interesting angles of a bike can make it work.

Also knowing and having a good sense of color helps quite a bit as well. For myself, I prefer a simple palette of pastel colors if I can get away with it. I don't like to use too many colors cause I like a softer look.

## 2. Single card v. Triptychs or multiple characters

The single cards are pretty simple in the sense that I don't have to show anyone else in the space for him/her to interact with. The single characters also can be the hardest at times. I try to think about 15-20 different scenarios for them, so they can be placed in the best possible position. The triptychs I know I'm not going to do a lot of so I put in as much as I can to make that one particular set of cards interesting, as I did with the nine

piece Justice League for the **DC Legacy** set. The thinking on this is that I've always wanted to do a big combo piece of characters and what better choice than with the Justice League. I figured the most I could do on a single card was three characters from the torso up. Of course when I finished the first 3 cards, I thought I was going to be done, but I started thinking about the card collector books that people purchase with the sleeves. I figured it would be cool to get some collectors to try and achieve collecting the whole set.

My favorite triptychs were the Batman/Riddler "can you hear me now" and the Flash/Kid Flash/Superman Race-to-the-Finish-Line cards. On that particular set, I thought about the Superman animated series that came out earlier this century with the episode of who is faster, him or the Flash. Great episode and a great story.

For the Batman/Riddler set; it was really late, about 2:00 a.m. and the ice tea was kickin' in and I was feeling a bit silly. All of a sudden that image just popped into my head. As I was

doing the Riddler set at the time, the idea and creation just flowed and it was kind of a no-brainer to put those two in that particular storyline. I thought it was funny.

## 3. Step-by-Step

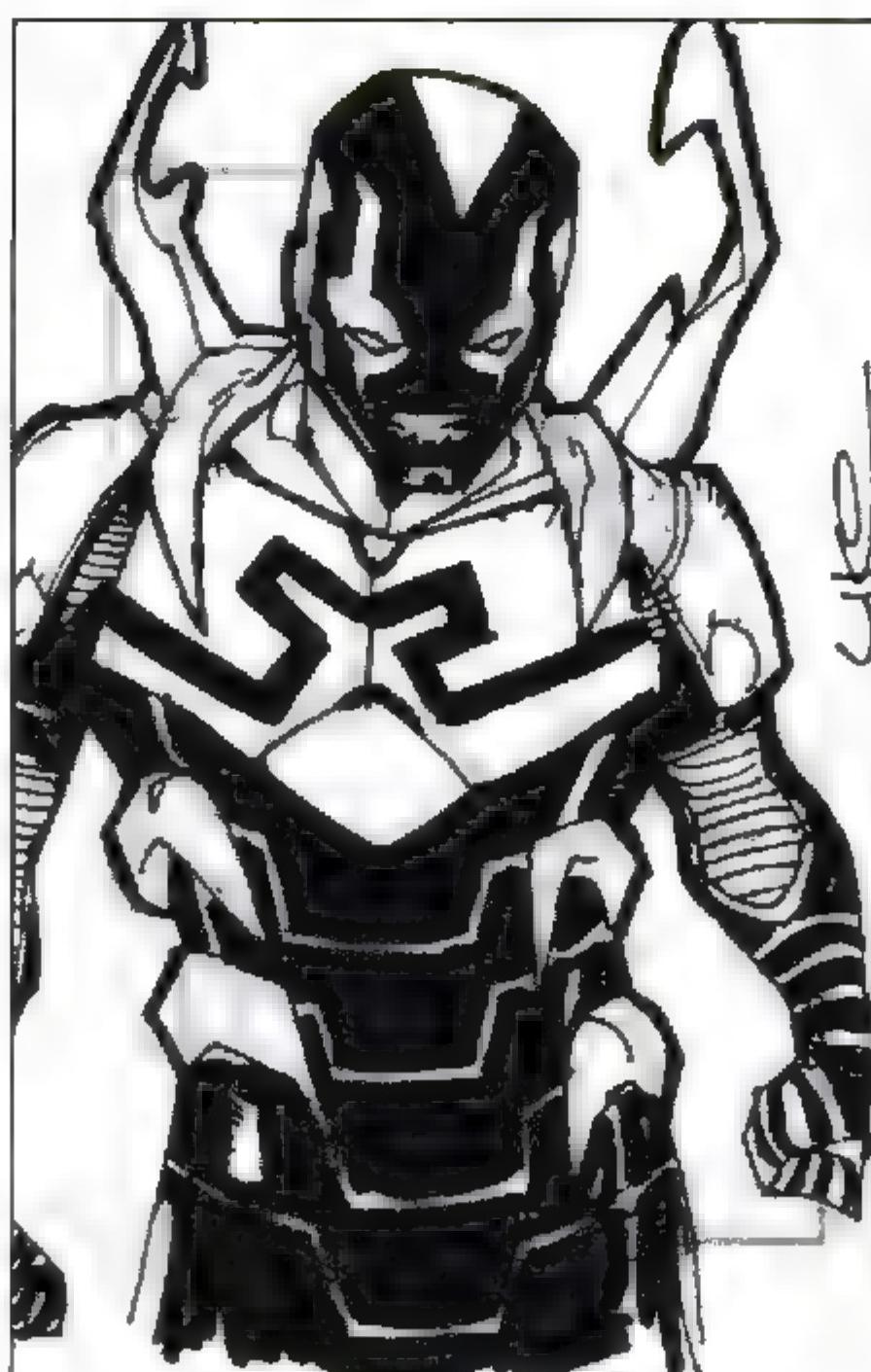
- a. Think about the character that I want to work on
- b. Collect some reference material on the character
- c. Think of scenarios or storylines
- d. Start laying out multiple cards in pencil in bunches. Usually around 8-10 and then start inking.
- e. Once I finish inking, start coloring with a base of light colors, then dark colors and then any highlights or special effects.
- f. After I get ten or so completed, I start scanning and start the process over again.

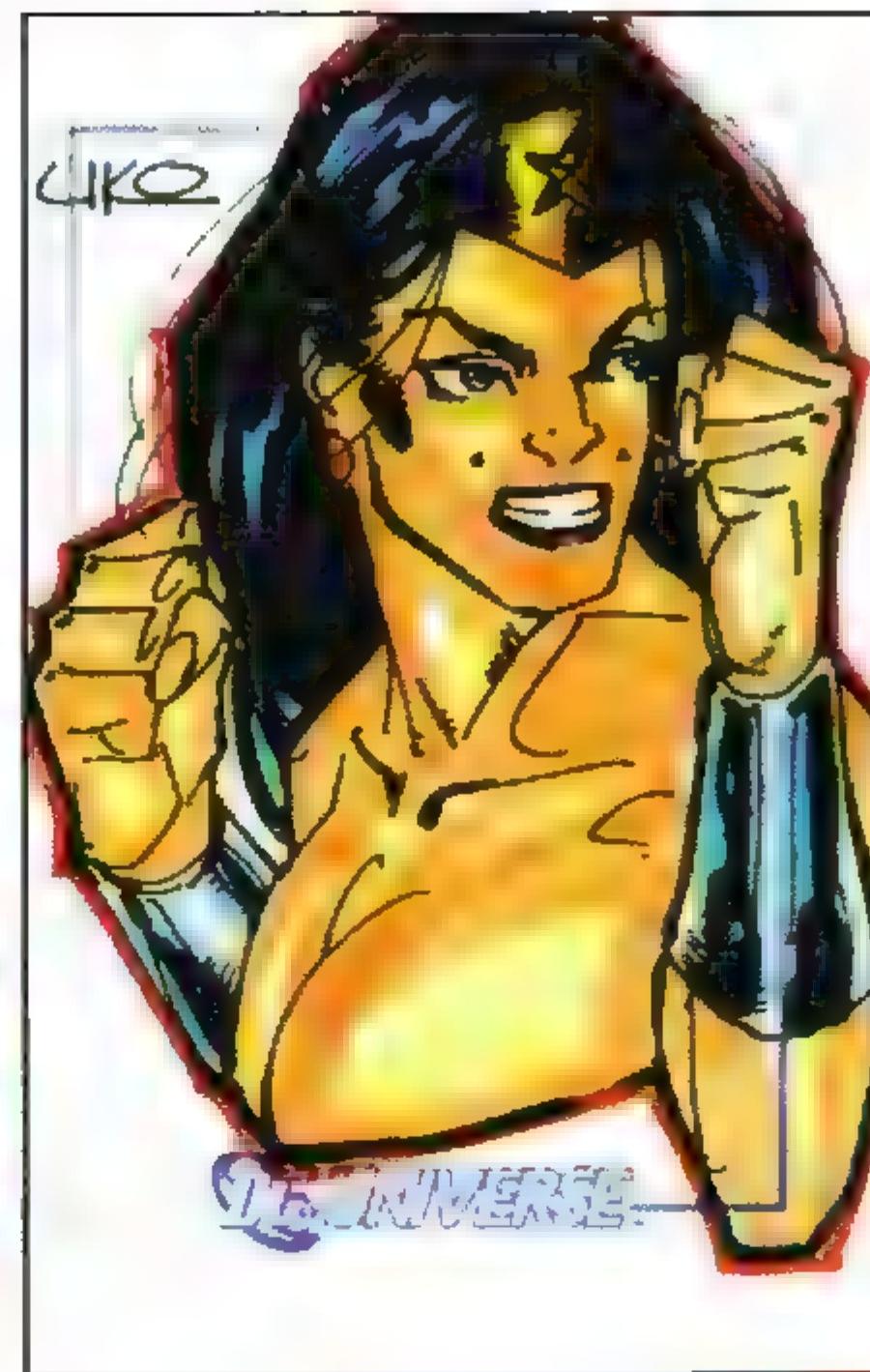
## 4. Materials used

- Mechanical pencil .5 H lead
- Copic markers
- Pitt Pens-B,S,M
- Watercolors used as a base on some cards

## 5. Prep Time

-Normally the first card of the day is what usually takes the longest. Looking back it would take about 40 min. to get the first card completely finished. That was usually the warm up for me to get the subsequent cards done in about 20 min. from pencil sketch to the finished colors. When I would start the cards for the day I would set out to do about 20 per day. But as the deadlines got closer I was doing close to 30 per day. After what I thought would be about 550 cards I would complete on this set, I got a call to see if I could perform more artwork for this. And since I was having so much fun there's no way that I could turn down. The remaining 200 cards I got 100 per week in the mail. I would get them on a Monday and wouldn't start on them until about Thursday because of other freelance work I had to do at the time. I remember specifically that during those two weeks I would knock out 53 in a 24hr. period and another 64 in another 24hr. period a week later. The latter is where the nine-piece Justice League idea came from. That was





completed on the last day when I had to make it to FedEx to get it to the offices on Tues. morning. I remember knocking out some of the headshots from pencil to color in roughly 5-10 minutes. I was doing so much in a short period of time towards the end that I was fortunate enough to have my girlfriend scan some of the cards in for me so she could make it to FedEx while I was finishing up on other cards. In total I ended up with 750 cards, which I think came out pretty nicely.

The Justice League cards that I completed in that 64 card stretch in 24hrs. are what took the longest. I didn't think it would take so long with those. Each card took about 45 minutes. More than what I would have liked but I believe it was worth it. I truly believe in giving not only the customer a good product but to let the offices at DC and Rittenhouse know that I was having a great time with these cards, which I truly feel they appreciated.

The response that I received from fellow artists and collectors really felt great. It makes me feel really good knowing people are enjoying my work.

There were times that I would stay up late to work on these cards and I would drink like a 12-pack of Nestea Ice Tea (which is my favorite). That kept me going since I really don't drink coffee.

I know that to do these cards in such a short time, my ability to sketch really quickly was a tremendous asset in getting these cards completed. If anyone wants to get into the business of sketch cards, I would truly recommend training and challenging yourself to putting down ideas fairly quickly. This is what I preach when I talk to my figure drawing class. Like I said earlier, my ideas in pencil would take anywhere between 2-5 min. and then another 10 min. for inking. The remaining time would be adding the colors, which would round out to about 20-25 min. at the most.

**MECHANICAL  
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## On The Shelf

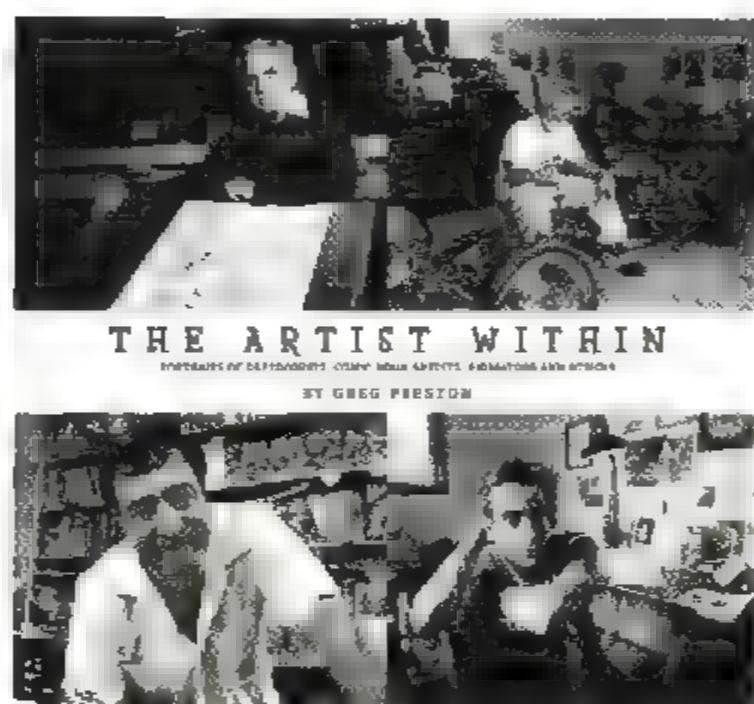
by Bill Nichols



### Akira Club

by Otomo Katsuhiro  
Dark Horse  
\$29.95

Having been a fan of *Akira* for some time, I was pleased to see a volume that shows off some of the astounding artwork from the series. There are sections in the book that include notes by Otomo, illustrating the thought behind the pieces, collections of the title pages along with illustrations and bits and pieces from the series and merchandising, and some unpublished work, which was my personal favorite section. A worthy volume.



### The Artist Within

by Greg Preston  
Dark Horse  
\$39.95

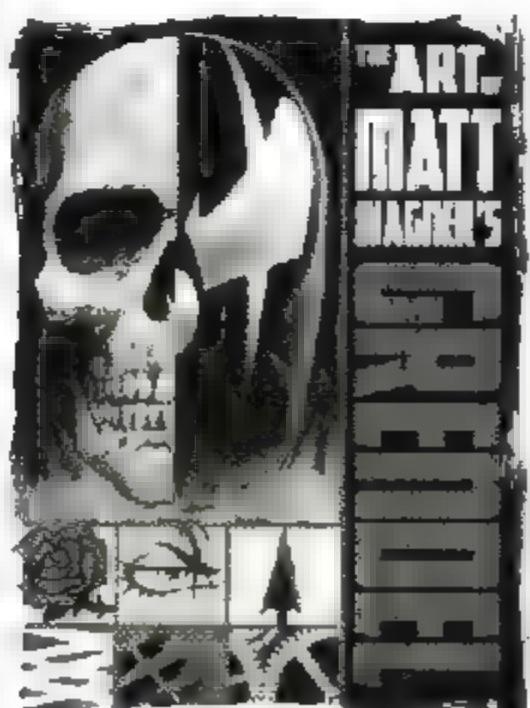
One of the features that I had thought to bring into the mix of *Sketch Magazine* was a look into the studios of various creators. My thinking is that you can sometimes tell something about an artist or writer by the environment in which he or she works and thereby, grasp an idea of

the source of inspiration (and perspiration).

This book shows photographs by Greg Preston of 100 artists from the late, great Jack Kirby to (still great) J. Scott Campbell, almost every artist in his or her workspace, surrounded by books, statues, *whatever*. There are a thousand details to take in, and then you look again and realize you're trying to read the titles of the books on the shelves.

But in some you get to see their drawing table and what might be on it. That's a payoff for me.

I love this book.



### The Art of Matt Wagner's Grendel

Dark Horse  
\$39.95

I thought I always preferred Matt Wagner's *Mage* to *Grendel*. *Mage* speaks to the subject of the hero while *Grendel* goes into the darker stuff. Perhaps I thought I was above that, but I guess not, because I really like *Grendel*, too.

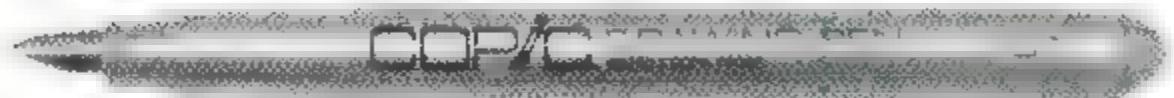
This book goes through *Grendel* from the very beginnings of the character and the titles. Matt

Wagner is talented to show the sides of our personalities from all these angles and it's illustrated right here for you. Check this out if you are a fan of the man or the title he brought to life.

# Comics 2 Games

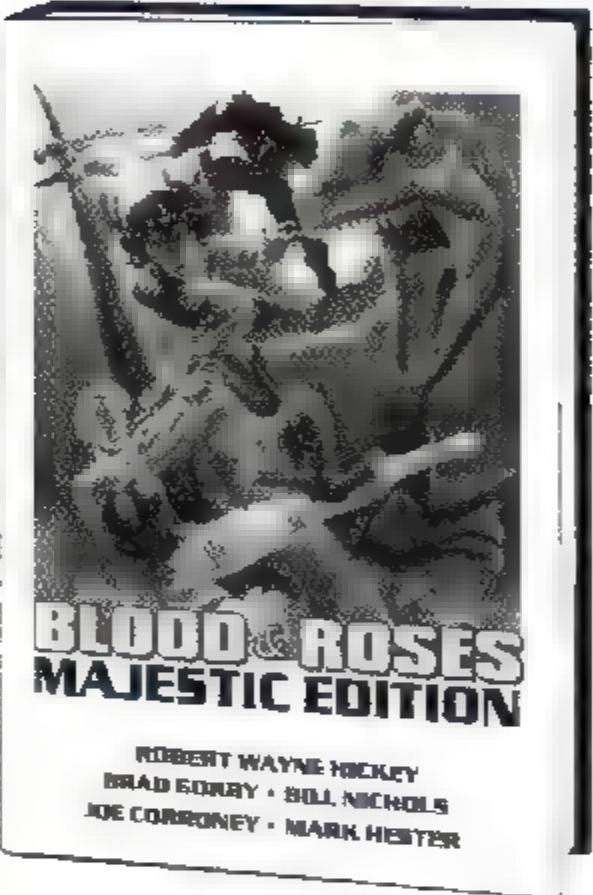
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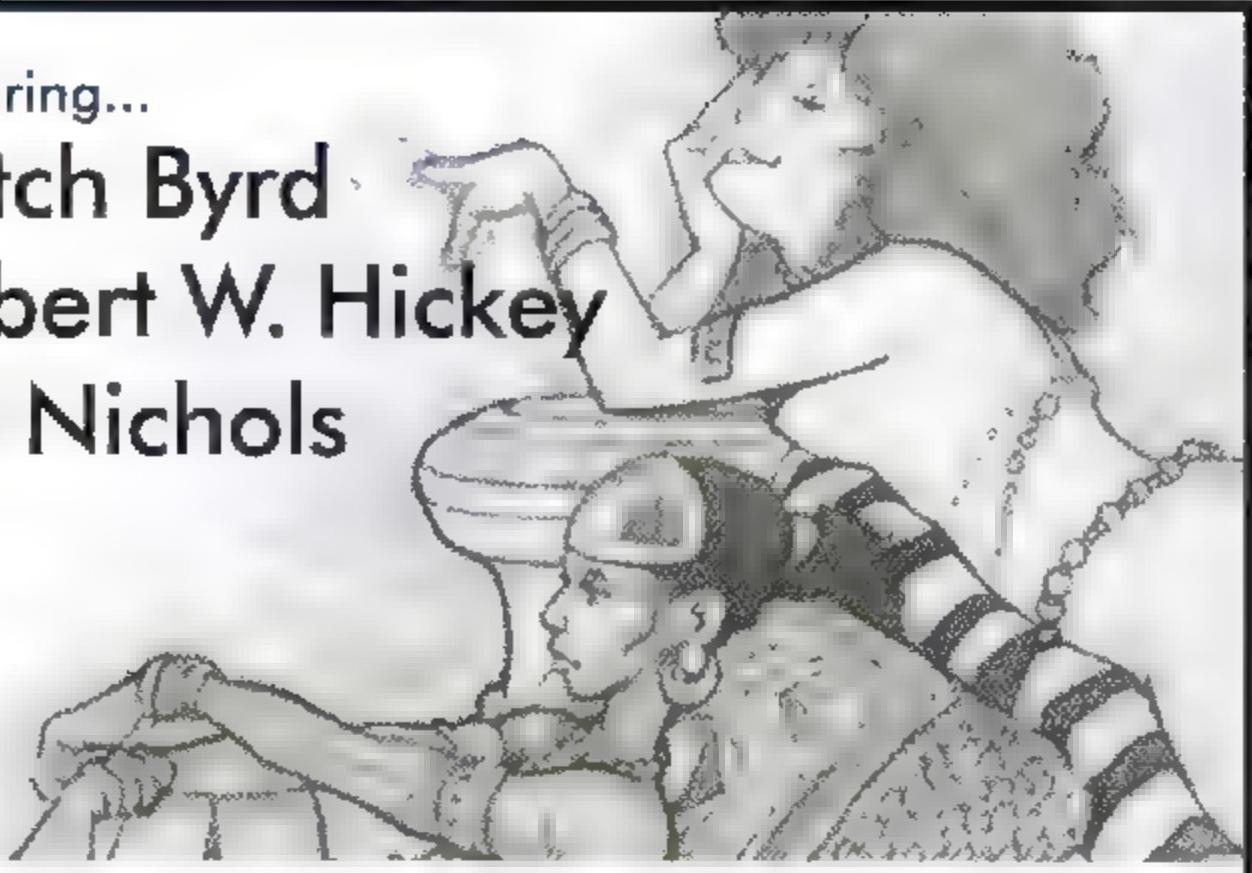
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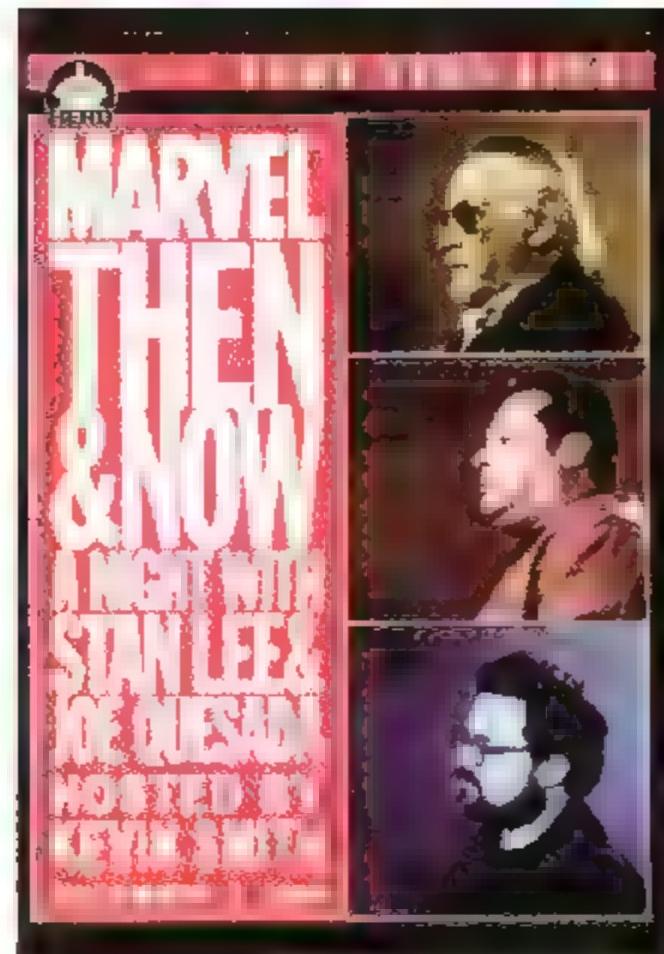
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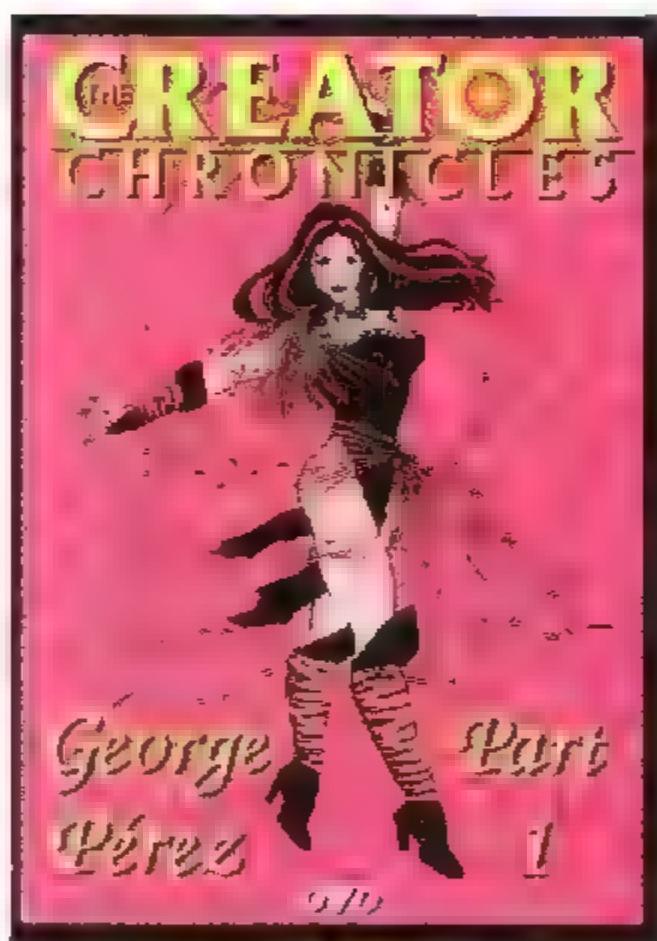


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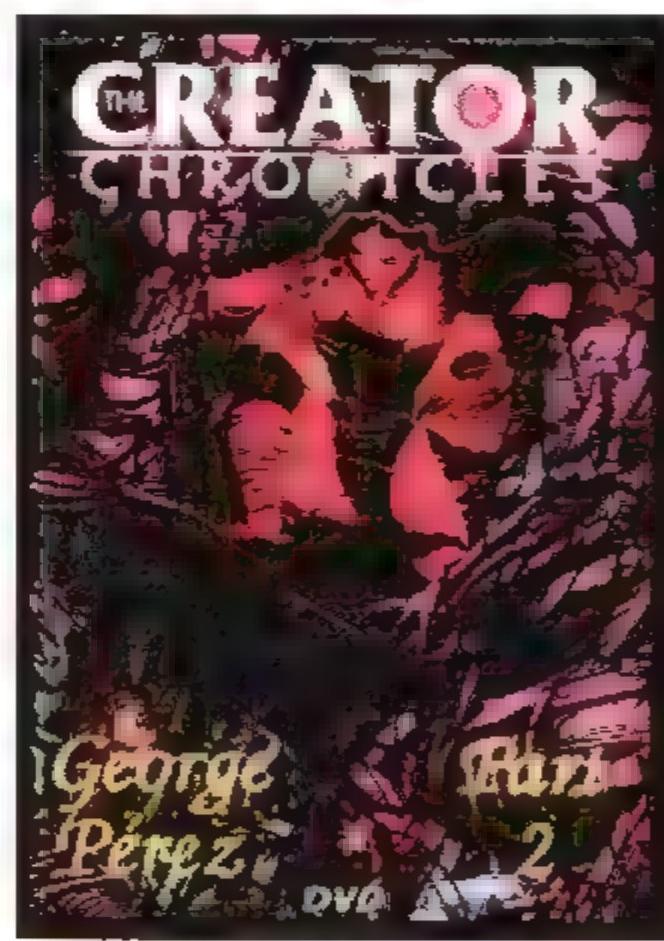
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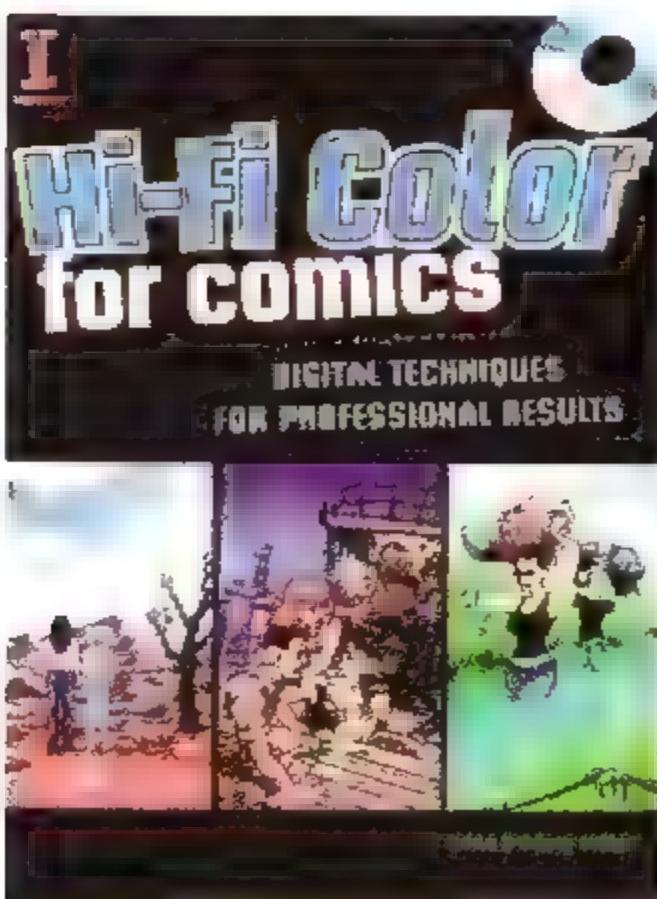
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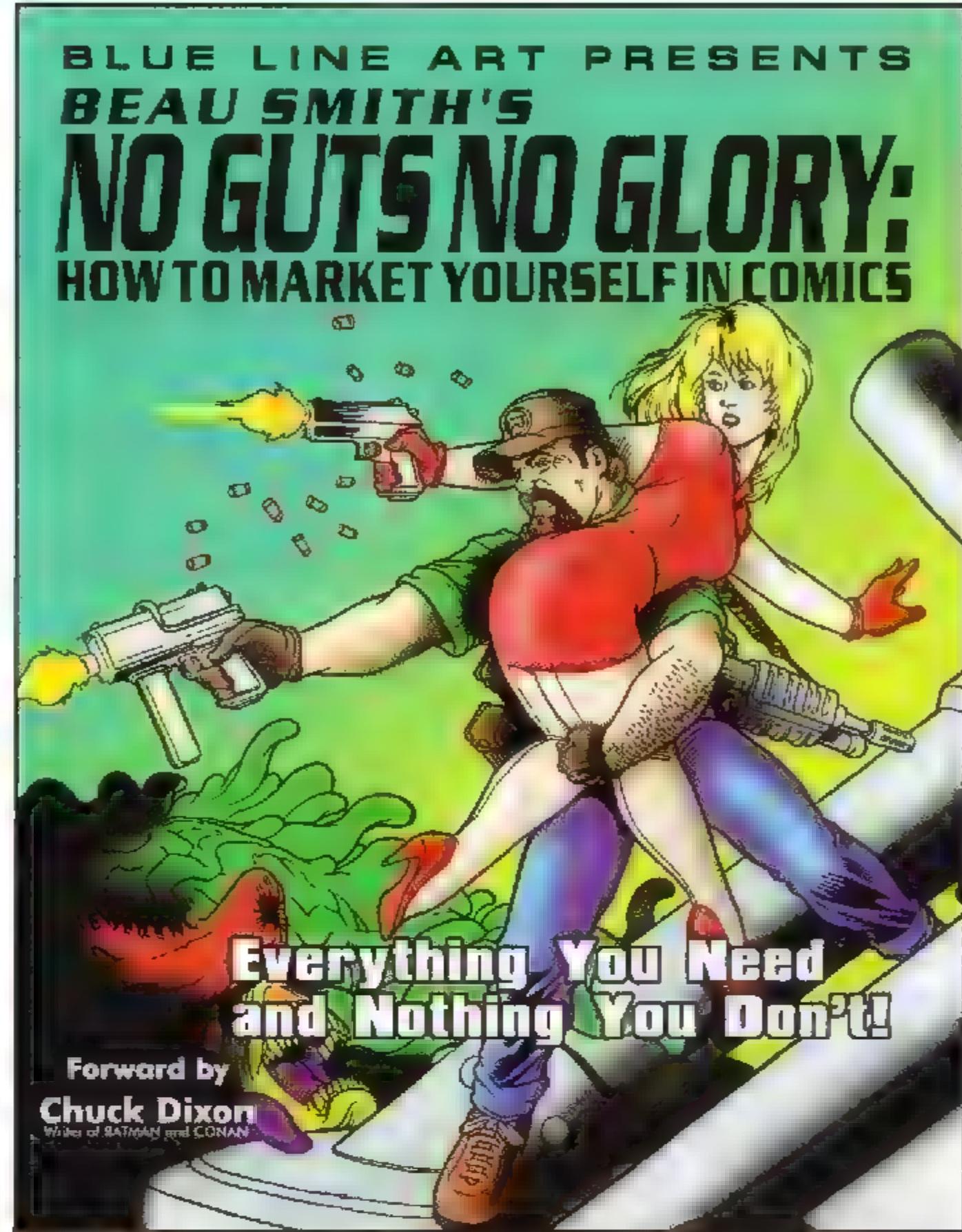
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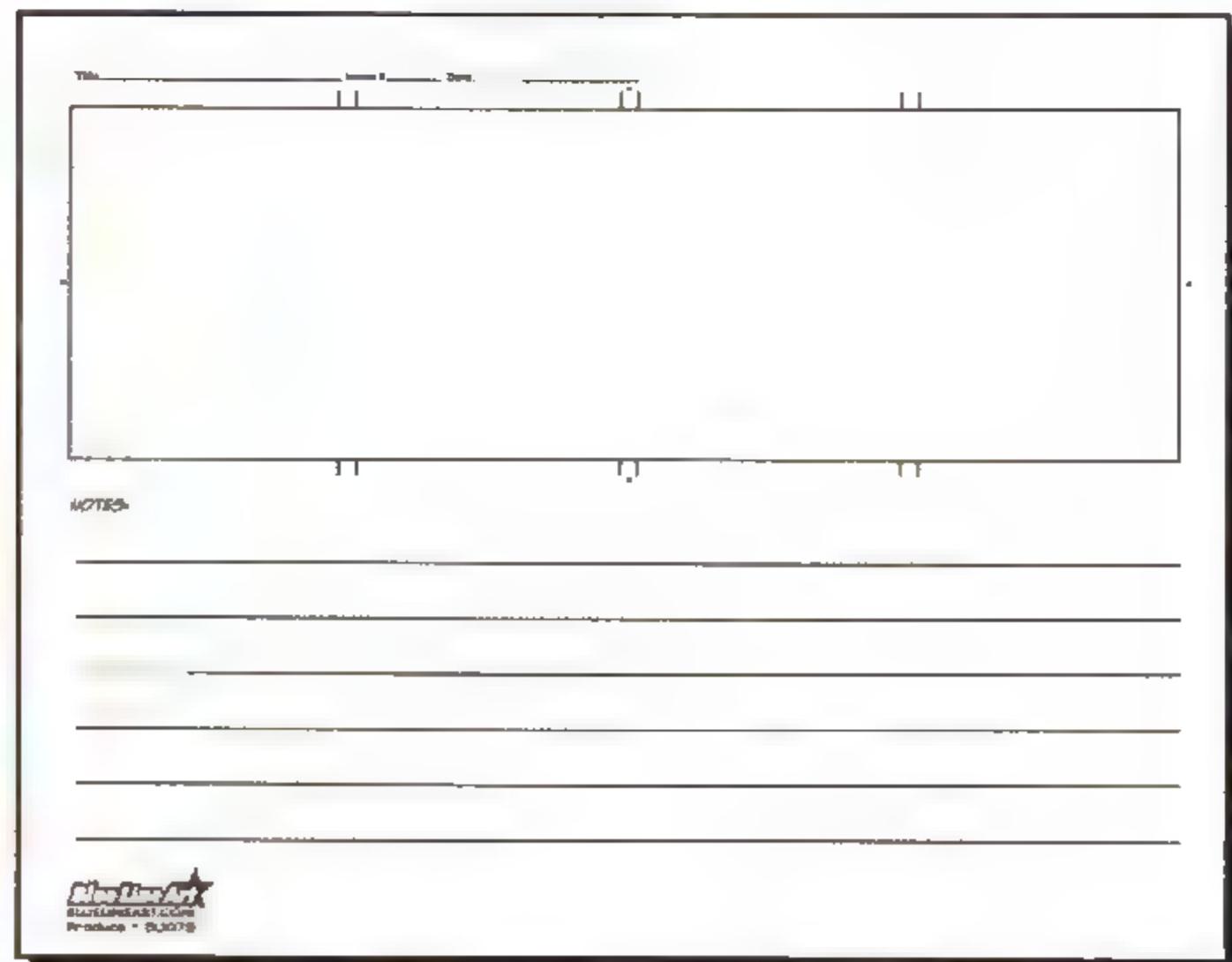
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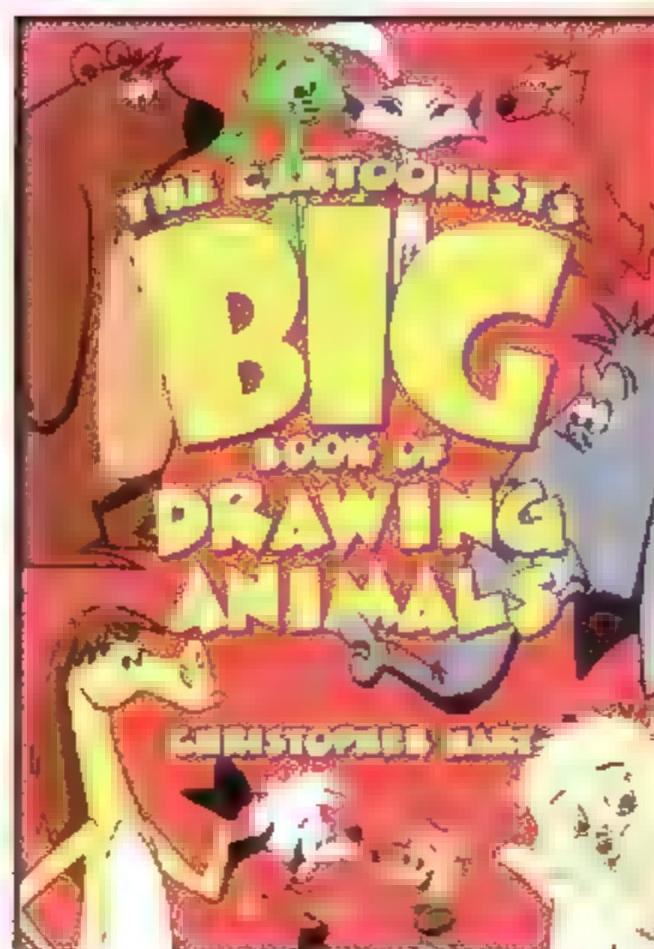
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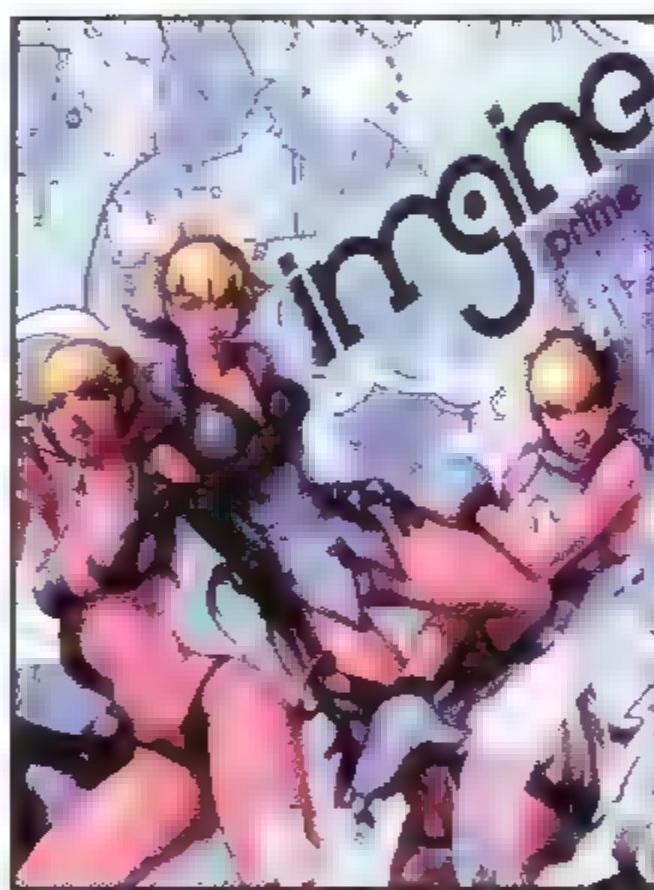
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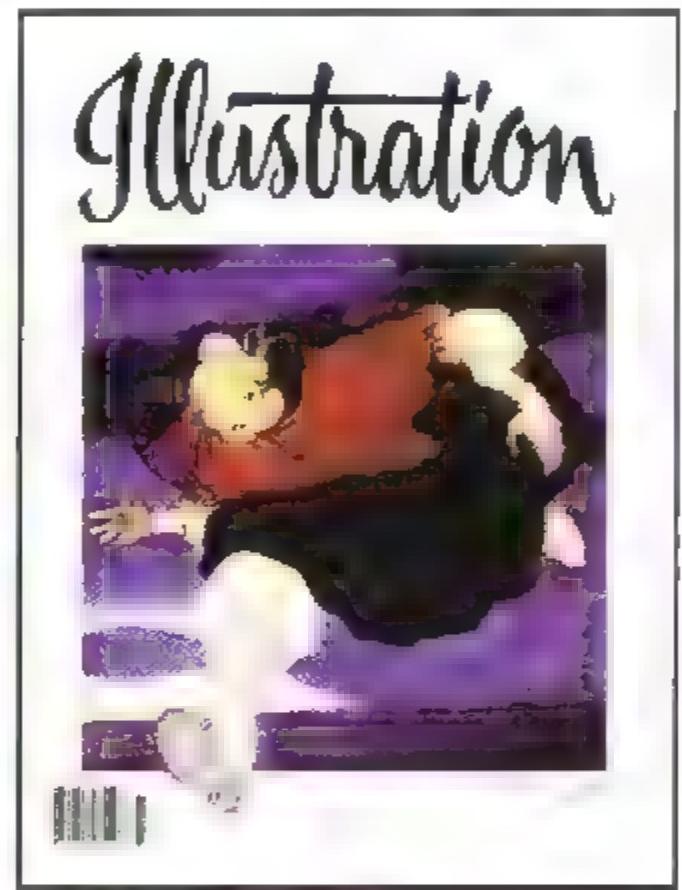
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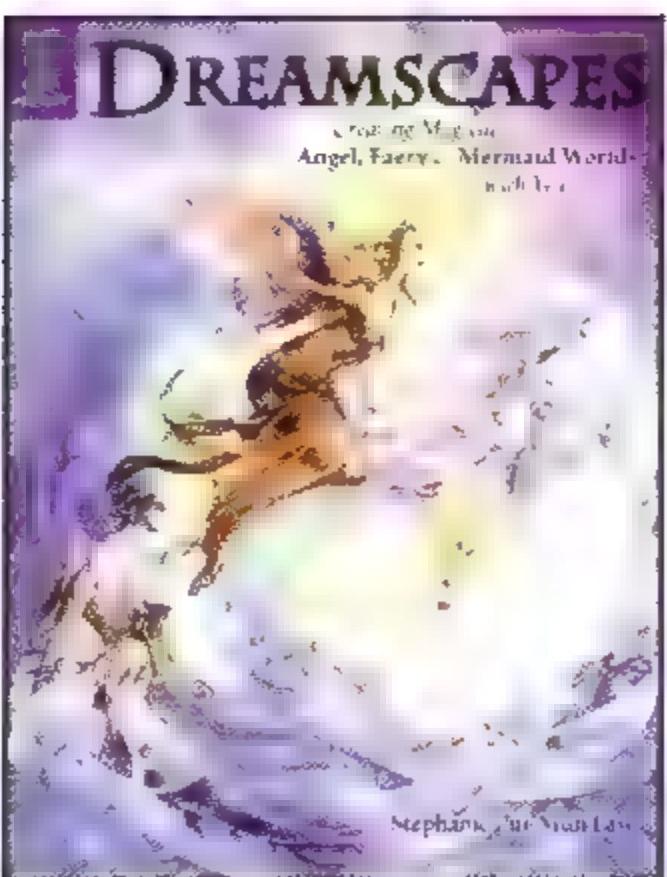
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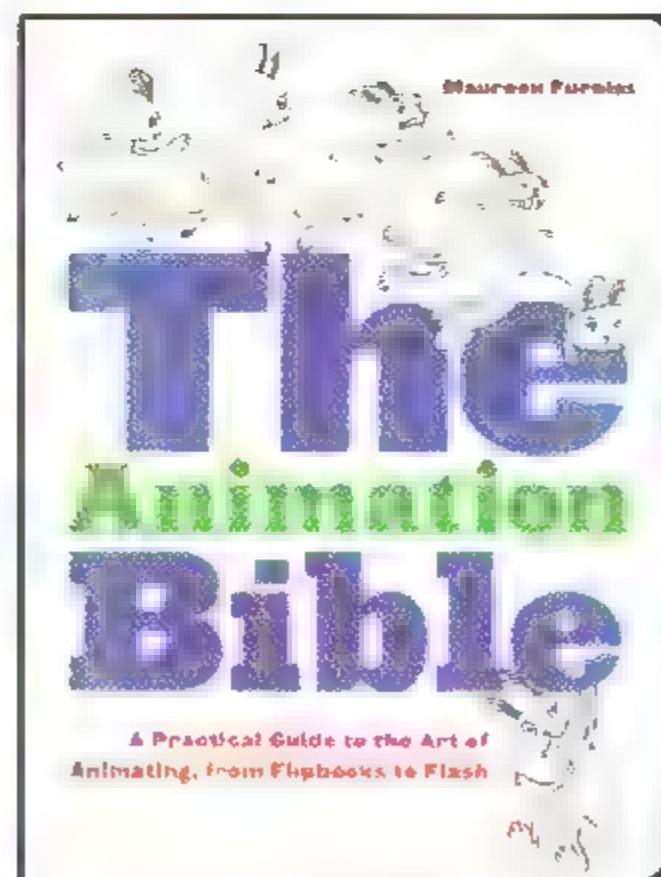
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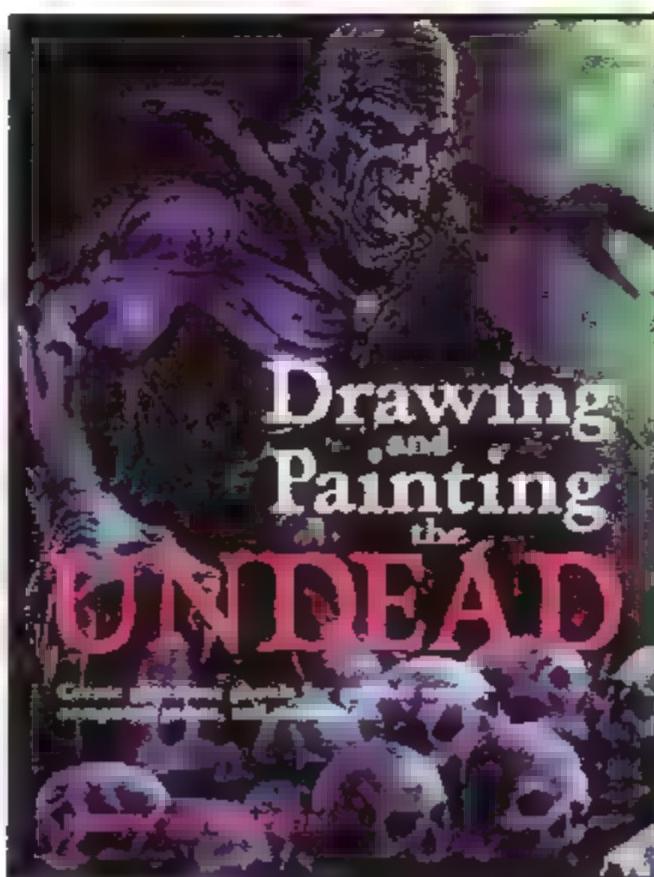
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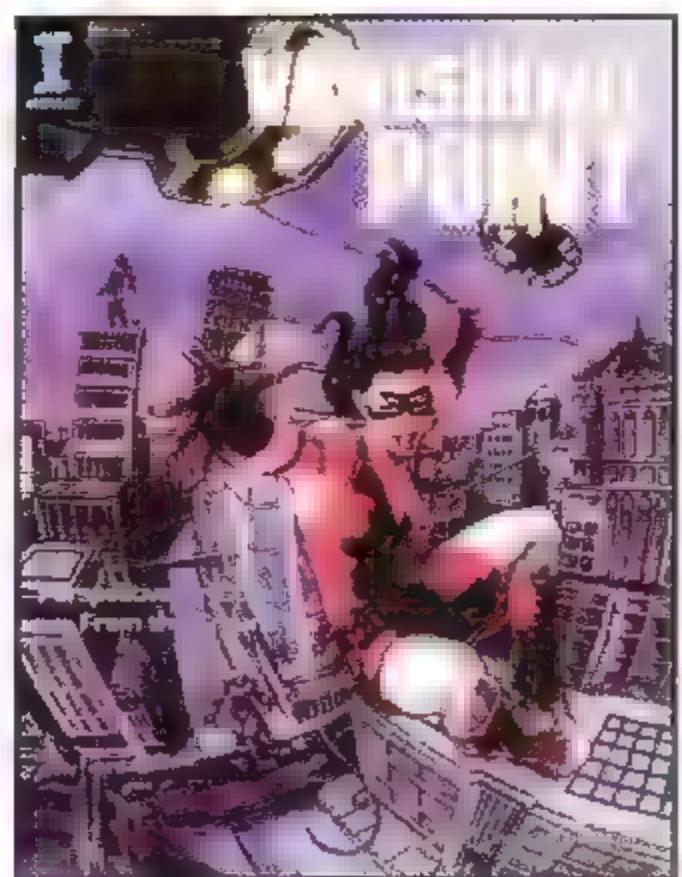
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contact [jake@viciouscirclecomics.com](mailto:jake@viciouscirclecomics.com). work to be on spec. / #35

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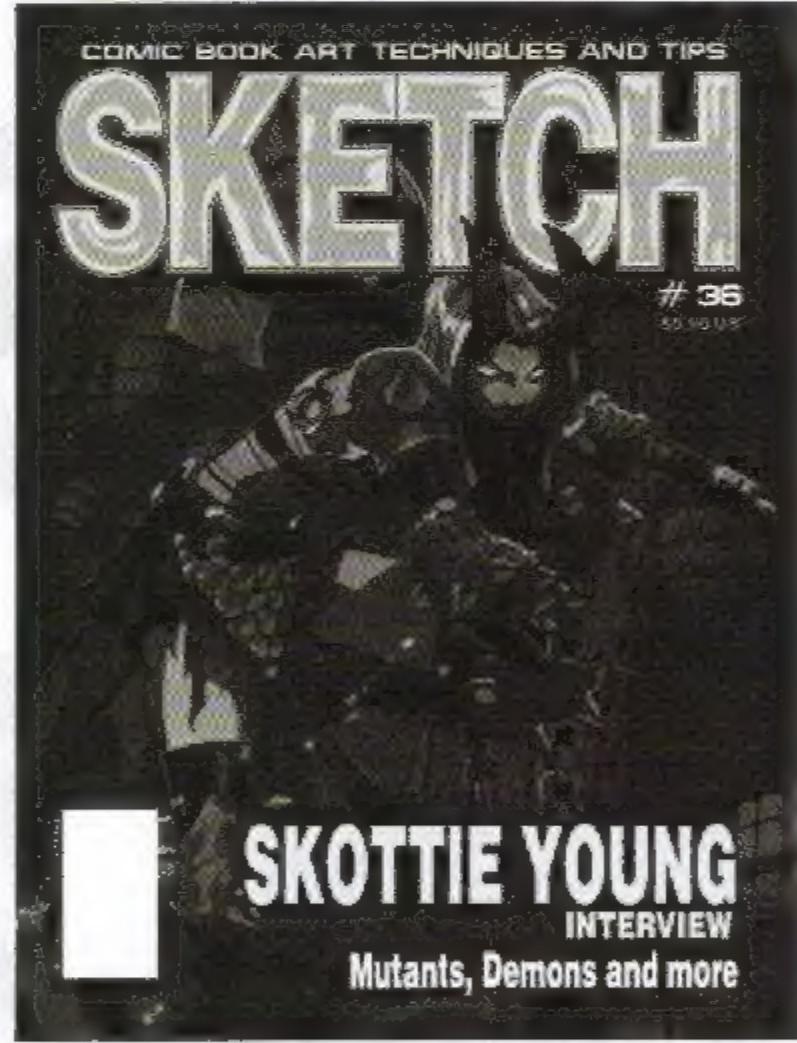
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